

Socialist Worker

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For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p



TAKE TO THE STREETS

MARCH AGAINST BUSH AND BLAIR'S WAR
LONDON SAT 15 FEB

WAR REPORTS...WAR REPORTS...WAR REPORTS...WAR REPORTS...WAR REPO

US plan to use nukes

THE US has drawn up plans to use nuclear weapons in an attack on Iraq.

The terrifying prospect was revealed in a classified presidential directive leaked to the *Washington Times* newspaper.

Stratcom, an arm of the Pentagon, has drawn up a list of possible nuclear targets in a "Theatre Nuclear Planning Document".

Polls show the mood

SOME 84 percent of the British population is opposed to a US-British war on Iraq, a poll by the *Daily Mirror* and GMTV revealed last week.

The poll also showed that 43 percent of people are against war even if Bush and Blair manage to get a second UN resolution backing action.

Bush's AIDS money a con

GEORGE BUSH tried to buy some popularity last week by announcing he would treble US spending on combating AIDS in the world's poorest countries.

The money amounts to \$3 billion a year. The US military budget for this year is \$379 billion.

And the US defence department asked this week if it could increase it to \$500 billion a year by 2010.

Why no war on famine?

MORE THAN 11 million people in Ethiopia in east Africa are on the brink of starvation, according to the United Nations.

But Ethiopia is still expected to pay back \$87 million to Western governments, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Just a few hundred miles from Ethiopia, the US and Britain are pouring vast amounts of money that could be used to stop famine into plans to kill Iraqi people.

Mandela speaks out

"ALL BUSH wants is Iraqi oil. We must expose this as much as possible.

"Tony Blair is the foreign minister of the US. He is no longer prime minister of Britain.

"Why does the US behave so arrogantly? Their friend Israel has weapons of mass destruction. But because it's their ally they won't ask the UN to get rid of them."

NELSON MANDELA

And Jimmy Carter too

"OUR government has not made a case for a pre-emptive military strike against Iraq, either at home or in Europe.

"It is sobering to realise how much doubt and consternation has been raised about our motives for war in the absence of convincing proof of a genuine threat from Iraq."

JIMMY CARTER, former US president

Bullying, bribing and lying to justify killing

BUSH AND Blair are ready to ignore the vast majority of the world's people to launch their war.

They are ready to wage war with or without getting it sanctioned by the United Nations (UN).

But to try and give their war the veneer of UN support they are also bullying and bribing other states to whip them into supporting it.

The rulers of France, Russia and China have made noises of opposition to Bush and Blair. No one should trust these crooks to stand against war.

France's president, Jacques Chirac, has already sent an aircraft carrier to the Middle East, and if given a big enough share of the carve-up of Iraq's oil will fall into line behind Bush and Blair.

China's leaders will do the same. And the US is bribing Russia by agreeing to help Russian president Vladimir Putin's bloody war of terror against the people of Chechnya.

The US is simply bullying the smaller states on the UN Security Council.

●Last week the US approved an extra \$4.1 million for the resettlement of refugees in Angola.

The Angolan government is desperate for trade and aid deals with the US.

●The US has given \$2.1 million to Guinea in north west Africa.

Guinea is run by a right wing dictatorial government, similar to that of Saddam Hussein's, headed by Luanana Conte.

Instead of facing condemnation, let alone the threat of war, Western governments hand over about \$200 million a year to his regime—around half of the country's national budget.



All the smaller countries on the UN Security Council remember what happened to Yemen during the 1990-1 Gulf War.

Within days of Yemen voting against a UN resolu-

tion supporting that war, the US stopped some £70 million in aid.

Last week a US official threatened, "Those countries that receive aid from the United States themselves

recognise the importance of donor dollars, and don't need to be reminded."

Bush and Blair are only bothering with the UN because they are worried about the growing strength of the

global anti-war movement.

But if slaughtering Iraqi people is wrong, it is still wrong even if the US and Britain bully and bribe the leaders of other states to support it.

A chain of false links

COLIN POWELL, the US Secretary of State, was to attempt to link Saddam Hussein with Al Qaida this week.

His claims are lies to justify war.

The US says that a man called Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is a key member of Al Qaida.

He was injured in the US bombing of Afghanistan and was treated in Baghdad.

But al-Zarqawi was never mentioned in the long list of Al Qaida's senior men which the US has paraded before.

"He's just an ordinary man," said a former Arab fighter in Afghanistan. "He ran a guesthouse in Afghanistan in an area run by an anti-Taliban warlord."

Another claim is that the Al Ansar Islamist group, which operates in an area in northern Iraq, is connected to Saddam Hussein.

Mullah Krekar, the leader of Al Ansar, lives freely in Norway.

He says, "If Powell says anything against me I can use documents to prove it is not true. Our aim has always been the toppling of the Iraqi regime."

Even high placed US officials say that there is no link between Iraq and Osama Bin Laden.

"I've talked to my sources at the CIA," says former CIA analyst Melvin Goodman, who heads the National Security Project.

"All of them are saying the evidence of a link between Al Qaida and Saddam Hussein is simply not there."

A day of global rage

NEXT SATURDAY, 15 February, will see the world's biggest day of action against war.

Up to 15 million people will demonstrate in 37 different countries.

Since the meeting of the social movements from around the world in Porto Alegre in Brazil last week, even more countries are now organising protests.

US anti-war activists expect more people to protest in New York than the 300,000 who marched in Washington three weeks ago.

Socialist Worker spoke to some of those planning demonstrations around the world.

"This is not a war to free the Iraqi people, this is a war to seize Iraqi oil. Millions around the world understand this.

"On 15 February we will fill the capitals of every country with one message—no blood for oil, victory to the intifada," says Simon Assaf in the Lebanese capital, Beirut.

"The global day of action is going to be massive here in Athens," says Panos Garganas of Greece's Stop the War Coalition.

"The governing party, Pasok, has said that it backs the demonstration.

"Both the Greek TUC and the civil

servants' TUC are calling for their members to join the march."

A Zambian socialist told *Socialist Worker* this week, "We've been inspired by London and the US. We are holding a demonstration in our capital, Lusaka, on 15 February."

An anti-war activist in neighbouring Zimbabwe told us, "We are holding demonstrations on 15 February in both Bulawayo and the capital, Harare.

"The two themes of the demonstration will be 'Stop the war on Iraq' and 'Stop police brutality in Zimbabwe'.

"What George Bush and his poodle Tony Blair are seeking to achieve, as unaccountable global dictators, is what Mugabe is doing at a smaller level in Zimbabwe."

Antonino Campenni is a national executive member of the Cobas union in Italy. He told *Socialist Worker*, "We can stop this war.

"We expect at least 500,000 in Rome on Saturday, but there could be many, many more.

"We are working on a general strike against the war."

GLOBALISE THIS!

GLOBALISE Resistance will be touring colleges in the week running up to the anti-war demonstration on 15 February.

The "Globalise This!" tour features three fantastic overseas speakers.

●Daniel Correa is on the national coordinating committee of the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), the landless labourers' union which has led an inspirational and successful campaign in Brazil.

●Antonino Campenni from the rank and file union Cobas in Italy was recently arrested and held on charges of subversion after the European Social Forum in Italy.

●Soheir Morsy is an anti-war activist in Egypt, and was part of the campaign

that launched the Cairo Declaration now gathering support across the globe.

The speakers will be joined at various venues by, among others, Tariq Ali and Yvonne Ridley.

Look out for the tour coming to a college near you.

GUY TAYLOR

■ **Monday 10 February, Liverpool University and Manchester. Tuesday 11 February, York University and Sheffield. Wednesday 12 February, Goldsmiths College and London School of Economics. Thursday 13 February, Swansea and Bristol. Friday 14 February, London.**

For more details go to www.resist.org.uk or phone 020 7053 2071.

Help to combat the Nazi threat

THE BRITISH National Party wants to try to appear respectable in the run-up to the council elections this May.

The Anti Nazi League is urging people to get active against the BNP Nazis and help expose their true Nazi face.

Tell the ANL about any BNP events you hear of in your area and send them any leaflets or newspaper articles about the Nazis.

Phone the ANL on 020 7924 0333.

Build the march Blair fears most

THE BIGGEST demonstration in British history is set to take place next Saturday.

The anti-war march is already expected to be so big that it has to have two assembly points.

It is no wonder the government is panicking.

Tessa Jowell, the culture secretary, tried to ban the march from its usual rallying point in Hyde Park.

She even claimed she was worried about what might happen to the grass.

New Labour suggested moving the rally to the outskirts of the city, proposing the Millennium Dome. The Stop the War Coalition refused point blank.

Jowell then came up with the Mall, until the government realised a massive demo on the steps of Buckingham Palace would be "a PR disaster".

The Stop the War Coalition insisted on Hyde Park, and Jowell caved in.

Blair and his cronies showed their desperation to clamp down on what they know will be a massive show of popular opposition to the war.

The movement has challenged Blair's ministers to reflect the anti-war feeling of millions across Britain or be swept aside.

Blair himself admitted to MPs this week he is putting his whole political career on the line by backing Bush's drive for world domination.

The anti-war movement in Britain is in a uniquely important position.

For all the US's military might, the Bush regime knows it will be taking a huge political gamble if it has to go it alone.

The anti-war movement in Britain has already helped spur the growing movement in the US.

It is also inspiring protests in the region of the world that Blair's fears unrest most—the Middle East.

The bigger our movement, the greater the pressure on Bush's weak link—Blair.

That's why veteran campaigner Tony Benn is right to say that Britain has a "virtual veto" over the war.

We have to let Blair know his political future is finished if he tries to wage war in our name.

That message should fill the streets of London on 15 February.

Every day in the run-up to the demonstration is vital.

Whenever the march is raised and leaflets are handed out they are snatched up in workplaces, colleges and estates all over Britain.

People who have never been on a

FIREFIGHTERS' MESSAGE



STRIKING FIREFIGHTERS in Brixton, south London, last week put forward the priorities everyone agrees with

Picture: LAMBETH TEACHER

demonstration before want to march.

Campaigners who have approached people who have not shown interest in protest before report a great response.

Every home leafleted, every student and worker asked to come on the march is a step towards putting millions on the streets in Britain and across the world next Saturday.

The more people inspired by the mass protest, the stronger the movement will be afterwards.

We will be better prepared to be involved in the sort of action that is

needed to stop Bush and Blair's killing machine.

Train drivers in Motherwell, Scotland, have given an example of that action.

Drivers working for English Welsh & Scottish Railway stopped another train carrying munitions for the British military last week.

The rail workers have been stopping such trains since early in January.

The drivers have scheduled a strike over pay for 15 February, but they have agreed to make an exception for trains taking protesters to the demonstration.

Seizing the time

IN THE next few days everyone has to make sure that they:

- Hold a meeting on local streets and estates, in colleges and at work.
- Leaflet streets, workplaces, colleges, and train and tube stations for the demo, and poster and sticker everywhere.

● Pin an anti-war badge on themselves, friends and family, and put up a window poster.

● Hold stalls to sell tickets for the march outside shops, workplaces and colleges.

● Above all...ask everyone to come on the march.

SATURDAY 15 FEBRUARY
International day of action against the war

March in London
Assemble 12 noon,
Embankment
and Gower Street

Organised by Stop the War Coalition
Phone 020 7053 2155/6 for details



War on Iraq... Firefighters...

Where is New Labour going?

Speakers: George Galloway MP Bob Crow RMT general secretary* Christine Blower former NUT president* Mark Serwotka PCS general secretary* John Rees Socialist Alliance Linda Smith London region FBU treasurer (*personal capacity)

MONDAY 3 MARCH, 7.30PM, FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON

'Big' men and old questions

RETURNING FROM the World Social Forum (WSF) at Porto Alegre in Brazil, I feel as if I have just emerged from a vast, multicoloured sea that swept all the participants along in a great exuberant wave.

The figures, to begin with, are amazing. There were 00,000 participants (twice as many as last year), including 20,763 delegates representing 717 organisations from 156 countries, who attended 1,286 workshops and ther bigger events.

The Gigantinho Stadium, capacity 15,000, was the venue of a series of packed meetings throughout the forum.

To be there when it was full of young Latin Americans cheering two English-speaking anti-war activists—Arundhati Roy and Noam Chomsky—to the rafters was to witness the development of a new internationalism. Even as experienced a speaker and activist as Tariq Ali told me that he was overwhelmed when he got a similar reception at the Gigantinho.

On the demonstrations that opened and closed the forum the small but noisy European anti-war contingent—mainly from Britain and Italy—was able to attract many young Brazilians who liked its dynamism and its focus on opposition to Bush's war drive.

George Monbiot was quite right when he wrote in the *Guardian* last week, "Far from dying away, our movement has grown bigger than most of us could have guessed."

Even the extreme right wing of European social democracy has woken up to the significance of the anti-capitalist movement that has stretched across the globe.

Last week's *New Statesman* carried a piece on the WSF by Edward Miliband, a special adviser to Gordon Brown.

He acknowledged that "despite their determination to stick to the politics of protest, not the politics of power, those gathered at Porto Alegre do represent a challenge and a lesson" to the mainstream centre-left.

Earth

Some people inside the movement are worried about the attention we are now getting from the governmental left.

Naomi Klein in last Saturday's *Guardian* complained about the prominence at Porto Alegre of "big men".

She specifically referred to the newly elected Brazilian president, Lula, and Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, both of who addressed big rallies during the WSF.

Klein asked, "How on earth did a gathering that was supposed to be a showcase for new grassroots movements become a celebration of men with a penchant for three-hour speeches about smashing the oligarchy?"

The answer is simple—most people who attended the forum support Lula and Chavez.

As leader of the Workers Party, Lula is seen as the embodiment of the Brazilian workers' and landless labourers' movements that are two of the main forces behind the WSF.

ALEX CALLINICOS reports on the debates that came out of the World Social Forum

Hugo Chavez is widely supported throughout Latin America as a symbol of the reviving resistance to US imperialism that is sweeping through the continent.

It is easy enough to pick holes in the politics of both men.

Lula is signed up to a neo-liberal economic programme that will make it impossible for him to fulfil the hopes of his supporters.

Chavez is in many ways a familiar Latin American figure—a radical nationalist military leader who is encouraging mass mobilisation against the right because he has to rather than because he wants to.

State

Nevertheless, the mass support that both men enjoy is a fact that more radical anti-capitalists cannot ignore.

Klein complains, "Two years ago, at the first World Social Forum, the key word was not 'big' but 'new': new ideas, new methods, new faces."

And it's quite true that there is much that is new about the anti-capitalist movement—above all, its capacity to organise internationally and the methods of direct democracy that it uses.

There are also old questions facing the movement that it cannot ignore. The most important of these is the state.

Klein and many of the people on the autonomist wing of the movement see the state as something that can simply be bypassed.

Changing the World Without Taking Power is the name of an influential book that sums up this approach—let's not worry about the state but just concentrate on building local and global networks that outflank it.

The past two years have shown the inadequacy of this approach.

We've seen the domestic face of state violence unleashed against demonstrators at Genoa and in Argentina, and its external face in the Bush-Blair war drive.

Lula and Chavez represent the wing of the movement that believe we can use the existing state.

They are wrong, but they are at least addressing a question that people like Klein evade.

If we want to draw their supporters towards more radical approaches, then we are going to have to come up with a better answer to the problem of state power.

inside the system

Racism's no joke

A BRITISH diplomat has not been instantly sacked despite circulating a racist e-mail as "a joke".

David Arkley, deputy head of press and public affairs at the Moscow embassy, sent a poem to nine of his friends.

"Ode of an Asylum Seeker" claims to describe how a refugee buys a big house with welfare cheques, invites 14 families to move in and forces his neighbour to leave.

It begins, "I come for visit, get treated regal/So I say, who care I illegal?" It then gets much worse.

Racist references include, "We have hobby, it's called breeding/Welfare pay for baby feeding."

Arkley admitted using an official e-mail address to circulate the message.

The Foreign Office is holding an inquiry.

★ A hospital patient has clinched a new world record for Britain after being left on a trolley for over three days.

Tony Collins, a diabetic, was in a corridor for 77 hours waiting for a bed while he was ill with a virus.

A few days after his record was confirmed he returned to hospital with a similar problem and this time waited 60 hours.

Tony endured the record wait at Princess Margaret Hospital in Swindon. He said, "The hospital staff were brilliant and in no way would I criticise them. But in different circumstances this sort of situation could have been fatal."

Reward is down the line

TUBELINES IS one of the private consortia taking over parts of London Underground under New Labour's PPP scheme.

Private Eye magazine has unearthed some characters at the head of this outfit. ●ANDREW CLEAVES is Tubelines' contract director. He is a former London Underground manager who worked on secondment to former transport secretary Stephen Byers "to communicate the benefits of PPP".

●ALEX FOULDS is Tubelines' director of business planning. He used to be the "PPP transaction manager at London Underground, responsible for developing the contractual performance and payment regimes".

●MARTIN BROWN is Tubelines' health and safety director. He came to the firm from the Health and Safety Executive where he agreed "the safety case" for PPP.

Blair's lapdog is laid bare

THE PRO-WAR camp notched up a notable supporter last week—nightclub owner Peter Stringfellow.

Perhaps you thought he was just a sleazy businessman who makes his money from exploiting women in lap-dancing clubs.

You'd be right. Stringfellow is famous for "pushing back the boundaries" of such "entertainment" by winning the legal right to put on nude pole-dancing.

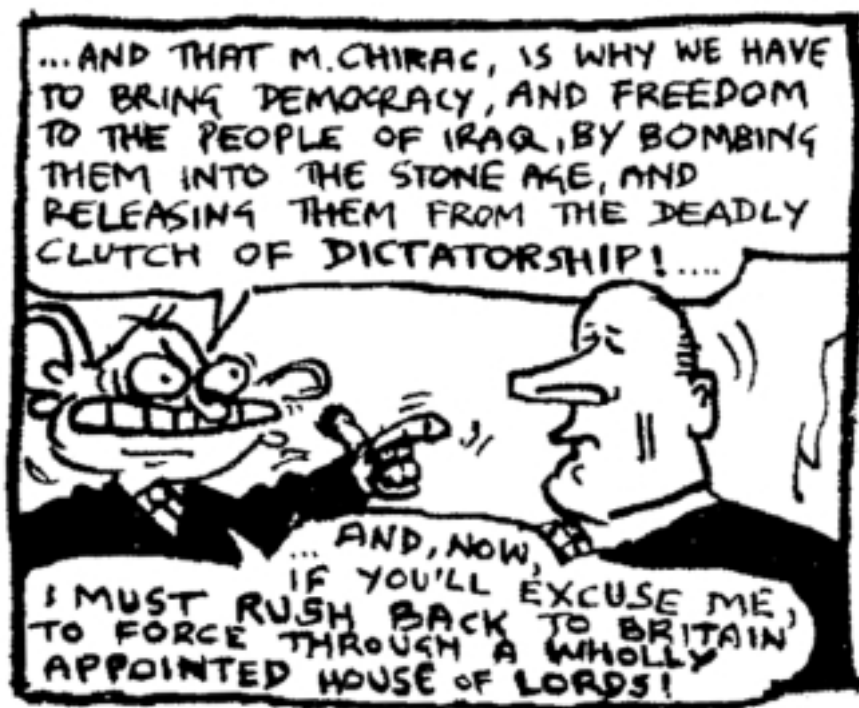
After the attack on the World Trade

Centre his greatest concern seemed to be the effect on his clubs if fewer greasy financiers came to spend their cash.

But Stringfellow is also a strong Tory. He is a member of a Conservative business circle who each pay at least £10,000 a year to the party and are guaranteed access to members of the shadow cabinet.

When he signed up Stringfellow said the Tory leadership was considering a policy idea that he had mentioned over dinner.

A sexist Tory—just the man to back Tony Blair over war on Iraq.



Court out

WHEN Lawrence Jacobs walked into a Louisiana court for his son's trial a few weeks ago he couldn't believe his eyes.

The prosecutor was wearing a tie with a dancing noose on it.

Mr Jacobs's son is being tried on a capital murder charge.

On a later day another prosecutor had a tie with an image of the grim reaper.

Defence lawyers say this is just the latest evidence of a bloodthirsty culture in the district attorney's office.

In East Baton Rouge, 75 miles away, the district attorney celebrates death sentences with office parties replete with steaks and Jim Beam whiskey.

* Thanks to Diana French for this story.

Secret freeze squeeze

GOVERNMENT ministers have tried to keep secret a report which shows their total failure to meet a pledge to make sure the poorest households keep warm in winter.

In 2001 the government said 2.3 million households would get help for improvements such as insulating their homes to cut fuel bills.

Now the most opti-

Not ready for the obituaries

THE HIGH Court is trying to decide if the working class still exists.

The Earl of Cadogan is trying to stop a property company building luxury houses on a site in Chelsea originally intended to provide homes for the poor.

The earl is one of the richest men in Britain. He is worth a massive £1.3 billion.

The land in question was sold by the earl's grandfather in 1929 "for the housing of the working classes".

The property company, Dano Ltd, claims that the term is now meaningless.

The firm's barrister said "working classes"

used to mean those employed in manual or industrial jobs for wages.

But the barrister added, "It is not possible to say today with any degree of certainty or precision what is meant by working class or whether any person is within that description."

The earl says it does still mean something.

Inside the System is prepared to provide expert witnesses to back up the earl's line for as little as, say, 10 percent of his fortune.

★ A supermarket manager, hailed as a hero by the press after robbers battered him, was sacked after taking sick leave due to the stress of the attack.

Sean Flynn had tried to stop two men taking £4,000.

An employment tribunal last week told his ex-employers Kwik Save to pay him £17,500 for unfairly dismissing him.

The company said, "We believed we were acting in his best interests."

THINGS THEY SAY

"THESE tuition fees, paid after graduation, are likely to increase student debt, especially for low income students, which, as this study showed, deterred their participation in higher education."

■ UNIVERSITIES UK, which represents vice-chancellors, on their report into fees

"SOME OF these will be assumptions and stereotypical nonsense whipped up by elements of the media. It is important to challenge these. Britain is not a soft touch."

■ KEN JONES, head of Sussex police force, on refugees

"I'VE gotten nervous at some of the pronouncements Rumsfeld has made. He almost sometimes seems to be enjoying it."

■ GENERAL NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF

"IT'S SO bad being homeless in winter. They should go somewhere hot like the Caribbean where they can eat free fish all day."

■ LADY VICTORIA HERVEY, royal hanger-on

"THE chief characteristic of Tony Blair is that you can never believe a word he says. He is not the first prime minister you can say this of, but he is the one least inclined to telling the truth."

■ ALAN WATKINS, senior political commentator

"I WAS taken to a room by a Labour official and I assumed someone would fetch me. I couldn't walk to the reception and didn't have my wheelchair. But no one came. I think they just forgot about me."

■ LORD BRUCE OF DONINGTON, who helped set up the NHS, who was abandoned at a Downing Street reception

DO YOU have a story for Inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH.

All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.

‘Throughout the 20th century, small groups of men seized control of nations, built armies and arsenals, and set out to dominate the weak and intimidate the world’—George W Bush

BLOOD brothers Bush and Blair met in Washington last week to plan the final elements of their war against Iraq.

Days before, both had made chilling speeches about the era of permanent war.

Answering questions in the House of Commons, Blair laid out his readiness to attack Iraq.

An anti-war MP shouted, “Who’s next?” Replying to the heckle, Blair said, “After we deal with Iraq we do, yes, through the UN, have to confront North Korea about

its weapons programme.”

Oblivious to the role of Britain as the world’s second biggest arms dealer, he continued, “We have to confront those companies and individuals trading in weapons of mass destruction.”

To another cry of “When do we stop?” Blair answered, “We stop when the threat to our security is properly and fully dealt with.”

Blair’s wars will provoke more resistance and drive more desperate people into attacks against Britain.

He will then declare another round of bloodletting to crush those who are deemed to have insufficiently

humbled themselves before the great powers.

The State of the Union speech delivered by George Bush to a joint session of Congress was an exercise in the grossest hypocrisy.

It avoided any attempt to deal with the issues and instead indulged in the biggest possible lies.

Like the gangster boss he so closely resembles, Bush vowed that Iraq would soon feel “the full force and might of the US military”.

He described the hundreds of thousands of troops, the missile launchers and the bombers which will attack Iraq as “those who will keep

the peace”.

Bush told the Iraqi people that a US military occupation would be “the day of your liberation”, and that “your enemy is not surrounding your country—your enemy is ruling your country”.

Presumably the “friends” of the Iraqi people are the US military, which plans to unleash 800 cruise missiles on Iraq in the first few days of its “shock and awe” assault.

Bush gloried in the way the US now operates without even the pretence of legal process if it defines someone as a “terrorist suspect”.

He said that, as well as thousands of arrests, “many others have met a different fate. Let’s put it this way—they are no longer a problem to the United States.”

There will now be a “Terrorist Threat Integration Centre” to unite the CIA, FBI, the Pentagon and the new Homeland Security Department.

This will shred many of the constitutional safeguards against official surveillance of US citizens.

Bush’s final big lie was to claim it is Saddam Hussein who set out to “dominate the weak and intimidate the world”.

It is not Iraq that is “intimidating the world”—it is the blood brothers’ war plan for 2003 which is the global threat.

Blair’s undemocratic and right wing war pact

A GROUP of European leaders put together a letter last week saying they stand totally with George W Bush.

The signatories are some of the most right wing leaders on the continent, and they have utterly ignored democracy.

In every country whose leaders signed up there is a majority, varying from 70 to 90 percent, against Bush and Blair’s line.

On the letter were:
JOSE MARIA AZNAR, Spain: He began his political career in the party which supported Spain’s fascist dictator, Franco. Aznar’s government posthumously decorated one of Franco’s torturers.

It has also tried to force through huge attacks on pensions, benefits and workers’ rights.

Only 5.8 percent of Spain’s people support Aznar’s position on the war.

ANDERS RASMUSSEN, Denmark: Right winger elected on the slogan “Money for healthcare instead of asylum seekers”.

In Denmark you cannot marry someone from another country until both of you reach the age of 24.

Rasmussen believes in a “minimum state” and wants huge cuts in public sector jobs.

JOSE BARROSO, Portugal: Head of a government which boasts it has pushed through the biggest cuts in public spending of any state in the European Union.

SILVIO BERLUSCONI, Italy: Berlusconi personifies big business and right wing politics.

He defines his ideology as, “We believe in the individual, in entrepreneurship, in competition, in efficiency, in the free market.”

“Our enemies don’t believe in the market, they don’t believe in profit, they don’t believe in the individual. This is why we are compelled to oppose them.”

VACLAV HAVEL, Czech Republic: Havel, who retired last weekend as Czech president, has always been determined to show support for the US and NATO. He sent Czech forces to fight in Kosovo and Afghanistan.

At home he has ruled while governments have delivered “shock” market programmes which have hurled millions into poverty.

PETER MEDGYESSY, Hungary: Banker and ruthless free marketer who remodelled himself after being deputy prime minister and finance minister in the Communist regime. He also acted as a secret service agent during the 1970s and 1980s. Now he is a strong supporter of privatisation.

LESZEK MILLER, Poland: Miller presides over record unemployment and is preparing to sack thousands of miners.

Abortion is banned except in extremely rare circumstances.

The Polish government and the US arms firm Lockheed Martin have just agreed a deal for the supply of 48 F-16 fighter jets. The Bush administration helped to finance the deal.

ANTI-WAR RESISTANCE STARTS ON FRIDAY

THE anti-war demonstration in London on Saturday 15 February is going to be huge.

The anti-war events really begin the night before in London, with a host of rallies, films, poetry readings and much more.

Accommodation in central London is freely available for all those who need it.

6pm Anti-war poets read their work, including Mike Rosen, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Tony Harrison, Benjamin Zephaniah, Adrian Mitchell and many others. Bloomsbury Theatre, Gordon Street. £5.

6.15pm The war on terror at home: how anti-terrorism affects migrant communities and refugees, with lawyer Gareth Peirce, Dr Siddiqui of the Muslim Parliament and author Ghada Karmi. Room 10/13, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road.

6.30pm Trade union rally including Bob Crow (RMT), Jack Hyman (US West Coast longshoreman), Mark Serwotka (PCS) and Billy Hayes (CWU), chaired by Andrew Murray (Aslef). Bloomsbury Baptist Church, Shaftesbury Avenue.

6.30pm Globalise Resistance video link-up with Edward Said, who answers your questions. Hong Kong Lecture

Theatre, Clement Building, London School of Economics.

6.45pm Stop the War Coalition special movie opening. Alex Cox introduces his new film *Revenagers Tragedy*. Curzon cinema, Shaftesbury Avenue.

7.30pm Stop the War Coalition rally with Tony Benn, Algerian resistance leader Ahmed Ben Bella, journalist Yvonne Ridley, Bianca Jagger, Denis Halliday and John Rees. Friends Meeting House, Euston Road.

8pm Showing of the film *11.09.01* with one of the directors, Ken Loach, and *Dirty Pretty Things* with director Stephen Frears. Bloomsbury Theatre, Gordon Street.

Cafe Bookmarks open for books, refreshments and exhibition of anti-war artists. 5pm-10pm, 1 Bloomsbury Street.



For more information phone the Stop the War Coalition on 020 7053 2155/6 or go to www.stopwar.org.uk

Fax 020 7538 0140
E-mail letters@socialistworker.co.uk

or send to

letters

PO Box 82 London E3 3LH

Prescott's name stinks in Hull

I HAVE worked in Hull for 13 years, and the name John Prescott was usually accompanied by expressions like, "He really understands ordinary working people."

His father called him "middle class and cut off from his roots".

He should have added, "He's a bully, a coward and a disgrace to the labour movement."

Prescott's name now stinks in Hull.

He has attacked the firefighters, for which no one will ever forget or forgive him.

He lives in a stately pile

in a posh part of east Hull, and he takes his constituents and fellow party members for granted.

Prescott prides himself on his constituency work and boasts that his surgeries are rarely cancelled.

When the FBU and the local Stop the War group decided to lobby "their local MP" recently, guess what—Prescott cancelled the surgery, claiming "important government business" was keeping him in London.

Prescott has completely sold out to New Labour.

□ ROGER SMITH, Hull

Growing anger over union fund

THE WELSH Socialist Alliance (WSA) held a successful forum on "Iraq, firefighters—should the unions fund New Labour?" last week.

The Swansea branch hosted the meeting. The speakers were Paul Elliot, Unison's senior regional organiser and a Labour Party member, Neil McPherson, the Mid and West Wales FBU secretary, and Charlie Balch, CWU branch secretary for South East Wales and chair of the WSA.

Around 30 attended. Those taking part in the lively debate included Labour Party members, an ex Labour councillor,

an ex Liberal councillor, a leading Green Party member and trade unionists including an FBU member straight off the picket line!

Charlie Balch described how his CWU branch was no longer able to find a political officer as the officer had to be in the Labour Party.

Swansea WSA feel we are placing ourselves well for the future, especially for when Labour Party members tear up their party cards—or rather burn them as Paul Elliot stressed, because they are made of untearable plastic!

□ MARTIN CHAPMAN, Swansea WSA

New left voice for shop workers

ALLOT PAPERS were issued this week for the presidential election in Usdaw, the shop workers' union.

It is an important election and Pat Buttle, a well known figure on the left, is standing as a candidate.

Pat has been a member of Usdaw since she was 15 and is a great activist.

She's a left wing Labour

councillor in her native Darlington, and a longstanding member of CND and anti-war campaigner.

She is fighting on a platform of support for full time rights for part time workers and fair pay, not fat cat pay. Pat also opposes sweetheart deals with bosses.

□ KATE RICHARDSON, Manchester

Hysteria that lies behind the raids on 'terror'

THE RAID on Finsbury Park mosque in north London was further evidence of the government's intention to whip up mass panic about the threat of terrorism.

Abu Hamza, the cleric at the centre of this raid, is not the most sympathetic of characters. Few Muslims would see him as their role model.

He has become the *Daily Mail's* caricature of an Islamic fundamentalist, with his hook hand and support for Sharia law.

Yet many Muslims will see this attack on Hamza as a further escalation in the government's strategy of linking terrorism with Islam and asylum seekers.

Let's keep to the facts. During the raid the police found a stun gun, a CS gas canister and an imitation gun.

Does this pathetic haul justify over 150 police smashing their way into a mosque?

Hamza himself has never been charged with any offence.

Of the 200 individuals arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000, nearly all of them Muslims, there has not yet been a successful conviction.

The march on 15 February is therefore crucial for opposing the war and countering the witch-hunt on Muslims and asylum seekers.

□ MUBIN HAQ, East London

Rise of a global right?

OVER THE past couple of years India has seen the gradual but violent assertion of right wing Hindu forces.

They threaten to impose their Hindutva project on all public spaces, doing away with democratic rights, and trampling on the life and liberty of the minorities like Muslims and Christians.

The leader of such a party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is prime minister.

This Hindu nationalism, however, sits cosily with imperialist globalisation, privatisation and the anti-people policies of the IMF, World Bank and WTO, in spite of their talk of "swadeshi" (made in India).

The present Indian government wants to be included in the US-Israel imperialist nexus. It conducts joint military exercises with US troops and shares information with Mossad, Israel's secret service.

The "war against terror" is used by Hindu right wingers to raise suspicion about Muslims among ordinary Indians.

The rise of the Hindu right happened at the same time as the decline of social democracy which paved the way for the right.

□ SAROJ GIRI, New Delhi



Picture: LIVERPOOL ECHO

THESE PEOPLE are being turned out of the Eriscote nursing home in Liverpool

Victims of the cruellest cuts

FIVE ELDERLY people have died within eight weeks of their residential home in Liverpool being closed.

This appalling treatment caused blazing anger at our weekly Merseyside Pensioners' Association meeting on Wednesday of last week.

One man who is in his nineties said it was a disgrace that the government could spend millions on war but abandon pensioners.

There was talk of organising protests against the closure of homes.

The day after our meeting there was an even more shocking report in the

Liverpool Echo.

A staggering 3,618 old people are being forced out of their homes in Liverpool because of a funding crisis in the council.

Friendships

The story pointed out that as we are on the brink of sending another generation off to fight a war, the veterans of other wars are being separated from their families, friends and communities.

Old people's homes can provide people with vital friendships and security. When old people have to leave it

can be so traumatic that many simply cannot go on.

Being moved up to 80 miles away from home, like these pensioners, means severing ties with family and old friends. It is tragic for them.

Some 111 homes have been closed in Liverpool in the last year because of a funding crisis. The local council blames the government—the government blames the local council.

But the people suffering in the middle are the old people, abandoned by a system that finds money for war but not for caring.

□ NORAH RUSHTON, Merseyside

obituary

Nick Hopkins

COMRADES WILL be very saddened to learn of the death of Nick Hopkins after a short illness.

Nick was only 42 and will be missed by his comrades and friends.

Nick had been a socialist in his native north east for many years. As a hospital worker he campaigned against the Tory attacks on the health service, and the poll tax.

Having moved to London he joined the

Socialist Workers Party in 1999 and became an active member in north London.

He also worked for the party's printshop.

Nick was enthusiastic about doing a university degree course and building anti-war activity. This makes his sudden death all the more tragic.

Our sincere sympathy goes out to his family.

■ PETER GEE, North London

postal points

■ I ARRIVED in Denver, US, on Martin Luther King Day. This fell on 18 January and across the US people used the parades to put out an anti-war message.

Over 30,000 protested in Denver alone, the biggest Day ever.

There were a few hundred in the small town of Boulder, where I am staying.

Denver City has officially passed an anti-war motion.

□ KAREN EVANS, Boulder, Colorado, US

■ MANY THOUSANDS of people will have been horrified by the BNP's latest success in Halifax.

Five BNP candidates have now been elected in eight months.

Taken along with other votes in Stoke and south London this can't be dismissed as a localised issue.

It is clear the far right is now getting a hearing among some sections of the white population.

Shouldn't there now be some urgency in mounting a popular campaign against the still small but clearly mounting threat?

I think alarm bells should be starting to ring.

□ ALAN GIBBONS, Merseyside

■ THE ELECTION of another British National Party (BNP) councillor should finally discredit the arguments of those who say we should not split the anti-Nazi vote.

Those who voted for the Nazi BNP are working people who are completely disillusioned with New Labour.

Anti Nazi League activity to demonstrate what the BNP stand for will come to nothing if there is no socialist alternative to New Labour which voters can choose.

Disgust at New Labour is making it impossible for many workers to vote for them, and the BNP can become a reluctant choice.

The Socialist Alliance must stand in every election

in which there is not a socialist opposing the Nazi BNP to ensure there is something anti-Nazis can vote for.

□ TONY DOWLING, Tyneside

■ THE Mixenden by-election here in Halifax, which was won by the Nazi BNP, has a lesson for all anti-racists.

Social and economic problems have created the climate where the Nazis can con their way to victory.

We need black and white unity to fight effectively against the problems people face in the ward.

The poison spread by the BNP will make everyone's lives worse.

□ COLIN WILSON, Halifax

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In colleges, workplaces and estates

Anti-war fever is sweeping Britain



SOME 1,000 people marched through Cambridge last Saturday

'It's like an electric shock'

THOUSANDS OF people again took to the streets across Britain last weekend to protest against the war.

●"Swansea was brought to a standstill last Saturday as nearly 2,000 people marched against the war," said Martin Chapman.

"It was led by striking firefighters. Over 80 coach tickets were sold. There are now 16 coaches set to travel to London."

●Up to 400 people marched through Hull on Sunday to an anti-war gig at a local club.

●Some 400 people joined a rally and march to the dockyard in Portsmouth last Saturday.

John said, "It was especially young and spirited, with several trade union banners. Over 50 tickets were sold to the London march."

●Around 250 protesters marched through Luton last Saturday. A coachload of tickets were sold on the protest.

●Some 200 people joined the weekly vigil in Bristol city centre last Wednesday.

●Students from Atlantic College in South Wales joined over 200 protesters marching to RAF St Athans last Saturday.

●Around 270 people attended an anti-war meeting in Swindon on Thursday of last week.

"The anti-war movement has been like an electric shock to the town," said Andy.

●Some 130 people went to an anti-war meeting in Bathgate, West Lothian, last week.

●Around 500 people attended an anti-war rally with George Galloway MP and Lindsey German in Birmingham last Saturday.

Local anti-war groups held stalls selling coach tickets for the march.

●Some 80 people attended the first Stop the War Coalition meeting in St Helens on Merseyside on Friday of last week.

Hound ministers

NEW LABOUR ministers cannot show their faces in public without anti-war campaigners having a go.

Defence secretary Geoff Hoon cancelled a recent meeting in Brixton, south London, when over 200 people turned up to demonstrate against him.

Then Hoon faced 150 protesters at the Connah's Quay Labour Club in North Wales on Thursday of last week.

Richard from Chester reports, "Hoon was there to try to whip local Labour Party members

into line.

"Labour Party officials and MPs tried to ignore our attempts to make a citizen's arrest on Hoon for conspiracy to conduct mass murder.

"All the questions put to him from the floor were antagonistic to Bush and Blair's invasion plans.

"In this area Chester is now filling its third coach. Wrexham and Mold are sending their own coaches, and the small towns of Ruthin and Llangollen are sending two between them!"

Martin from Hull

reports, "We confronted deputy prime minister John Prescott last Saturday and drove him from the central square of his own city.

"Prescott had just ordered food at a local chippy when anti-war activists asked him, 'Why are you thinking of murdering innocent children?'"

"Outside Prescott was confronted again as an activist tried to put an anti-war sticker on his coat.

"A small crowd gathered but Prescott briskly walked away with his minder in tow."

Hannah from north London reports, "Tessa Jowell was in for a nasty shock when she tried to hurry past protesters outside the new Talacre sports centre in Kentish Town last Sunday.

"Jowell was there to support the Labour candidate in a local by-election. The firefighter standing for the Socialist Alliance joined our protest."



ANTI-WAR billboard in Bristol

AROUND 50 TGWU shop stewards at a Vauxhall car plant on Merseyside heard a representative of the Stop the War Coalition at their union meeting last week.

It is a sign of how the anti-war movement is reaching down into individual workplaces, estates, schools and colleges.

There was a serious discussion among the Vauxhall car workers about what action to take if Bush and Blair launch their war.

They agreed to donate £500 towards the train booked from Liverpool to the 15 February demonstration.

The train drivers' Aslef union and the postal workers' CWU have also made donations.

Neil from Bury reports, "There have been donations for our transport of £50 from Bury NUT, £75 from a local Amicus-MSF branch and £100 from Salford Mental Health Unison."

Unison members at the SOAS university in central London have passed a motion pledging to support members who take strike action in protest at the outbreak of war.

Students at universities across Britain are building for the anti-war march.

There are already 12 coaches each booked from Cambridge University and Manchester University.

One student at University College London held a meeting in his hall of residence and 15 students turned up.

The anti-war mood is also sweeping through schools and sixth form colleges.

A London sixth form student reports, "Over 100 school students attended a debate between Lindsey German from the Stop the War Coalition and a representative from the US embassy at La Swap sixth form in Camden.

Answer

"By the end the US representative had to beat a retreat from questions he couldn't answer."

Some 65 students and staff attended a lunchtime anti-war meeting at one site of Southwark College on Tuesday of last week.

Year 7 and Year 8 students from Ilfracombe College are making placards and a banner at lunchtimes to be taken on the demo.

School students from Sherwood at Bilborough College are organising their own coach.

One Cirencester school student has bought 13 tickets, while another bought ten for friends at a school in Cheltenham.

Sean teaches at City and Islington College, north London. He has helped to turn the college enrichment programme into a "Peace Week",

by JUDY COX

with debates on the war and asylum seekers. Ms Dynamite is hoping to take part.

It only takes one or two to get the anti-war movement started in any estate.

Dave from Torrington in Devon reports, "Last Saturday morning a local woman rang asking for my help in an anti-war protest she was holding at 10am.

"When I arrived the town hall was decorated with posters and a peace banner."

Two activists in Somers Town, north London, organised a meeting on their estate and ten people turned up.

Nine people came to a meeting in Clapton, east London, after just two streets were leafleted.

Some 17 people came to a meeting in the Park Hill council estate in Sheffield last Sunday.

Estate

Rita leafleted a few streets round the council estate she lives on in Prestwich. Six people turned up to the anti-war meeting, all wanting to build the march.

Colin from Chorlton in Manchester reports, "There are already seven coaches from our area to the demonstration, plus a local mosque is running two more.

"Two sixth form students have recruited more than 20 from their college to come.

"I'm a shamefaced Labour Party member," a local activist told us as he booked his family on the buses. "All the rest of my family has left the Labour Party. I don't know how much more I can take."

Bea from Heeley in Sheffield described a 200-strong meeting with local MP Meg Munn, who supports the war.

Bea said, "The MP was heckled by a man who came into the meeting supporting the war and changed his mind during the discussion."

Two thirds of councillors in the east London borough of Tower Hamlets have signed a statement opposing war under any circumstances and calling on residents to join the march.

Sheffield City Council has voted to oppose war on Iraq. There were around 80 councillors present and the anti-war argument triumphed.

Picture: NICK SAVAGE

Picture: JEFF BREWSTER

socialism from below

Are charges solution to the traffic chaos?

ON Monday 17 February London mayor Ken Livingstone's congestion charge comes into force.

Between 7am and 6.30pm on weekdays drivers will have to pay £5 a day to drive into central London.

The charge is causing huge controversy in the capital. No one really knows whether the scheme will work or collapse in chaos.

On one thing Ken Livingstone is absolutely right.

Car congestion in London is chronic and something must be done.

This is not just a problem in London. Right across the world, especially in the growing cities of the Third World, people are being choked and polluted by car traffic.

People's health suffers—usually that of the poorest, forced to live next to traffic-choked roads. In London childhood asthma is at epidemic levels.

Car exhausts make a major contribution to global warming.

Many attacking Livingstone's plan don't care about this.

They are the modern day Mr Toads, people for whom the right to drive in their cars is god given, a symbol of individual "freedom".

Papers like the *Mail*, *Express* and *Sun* sum up this Thatcherite philosophy.

Such people were well represented at a recent meeting against the congestion charge in central London.

The platform was dominated by sleek lawyers and Tories.

The biggest cheer came when a businessman talked of buses being full of people who "smelled" and called for "police to get on the streets and sweep the scum away".

The "great car economy" is central to modern capitalism, and was pushed enthusiastically by Tory governments in the 1980s and 1990s.

Public transport was privatised, deregulated and starved of investment.

New Labour promised to change this, but has given in to the road building and car

PAUL McGARR on why Ken Livingstone's congestion charges will hit the poor

lobbies. The resulting chaos not only damages people and the environment, but makes travelling a misery and is even worrying businesses.

While Livingstone's starting point is right, his solution is not one that socialists can support.

He is relying on market mechanisms that will benefit the rich while hitting ordinary people forced to use cars to go into central London. Livingstone says his scheme will cut traffic by 13 percent, though that also means leaving 87 percent untouched.

Eyelid

Who will be pushed off the road by the scheme, if it works?

Livingstone argues that the poorest people don't use cars in London. He is right up to a point.

In London 37 percent of households, mainly the poorest, have no car and rely entirely on public transport. Among the poorest tenth of people in London 88 percent have no car.

Most of those who drive into central London each day are by definition better off, with parking already at £4 an hour unless you have access to company car parks. The rich will not bat an eyelid at paying £5 if it clears a few of the proles out of their way.

But there are many workers on average wages or below who have little choice at present but to use their cars to get to work in the capital. These are the people who will be really hit by congestion charging.

That is why unions representing some such workers—firefighters, health workers, teachers, theatre workers—are opposing the congestion charge or demanding employers meet the extra cost.

The effect of the scheme will be to free the roads up for the wealthy. That is why the charge is gaining some support from business and the rich.

The real answer to London's traffic nightmare is not rationing by wealth.

The technology used to run the scheme could be used to ration car use on the basis of need instead.

People who have a greater need to use cars—the disabled, some pensioners, parents of younger children, some workers doing essential jobs—could be given free permits.

Others would be restricted to a maximum number of journeys a year into central London, limited by the overall needs of keeping traffic levels at a liveable level.

That would be a fair way to tackle the immediate congestion. To really curb car chaos much more is needed.

The key is to ensure people can travel safely, reliably and cheaply when and where they want and need to without having to rely on a car.

Green

In London that would be relatively straightforward.

There is no reason why with sufficient investment London could not have a free, efficient, 24-hour, and massively expanded, bus and tube system.

A major expansion of proper cycling facilities, with purpose-built lanes, not the dangerous stripes of green paint we largely get now, would also help.

Ending the insanity of league tables and competition between schools which fuels parents ferrying children across London would also help.

So too would a major programme of council house building in the capital, so that people had a genuine choice to live nearer work.

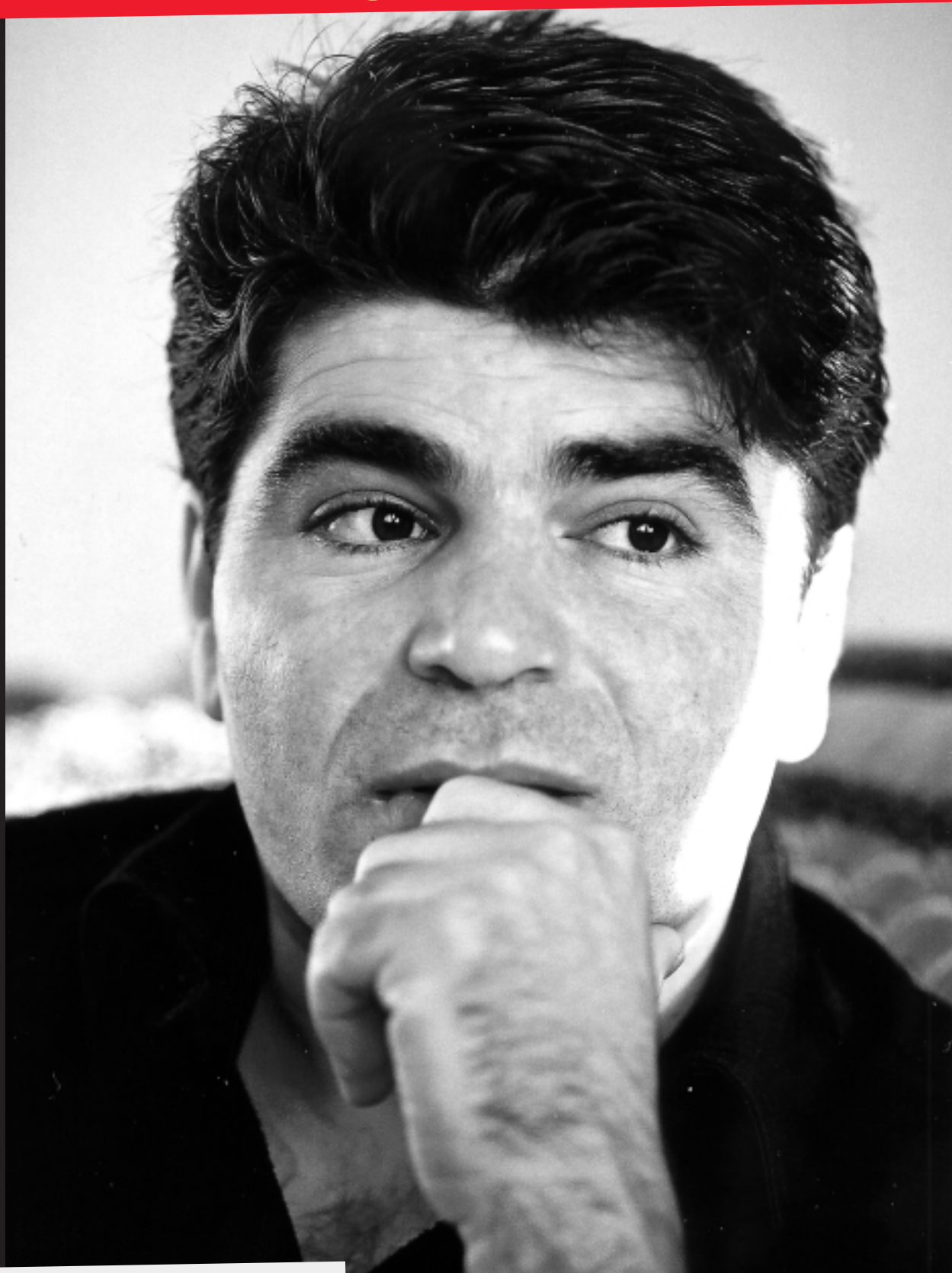
Such measures are the way to curb car congestion. That would undercut the car lobby and papers like the *Mail* and *Sun* and prevent them posing as friends of working people and the poor.

Busting the media's myths about refugees

'I fled Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Here I used to get £37 a week. Now even that has stopped. I'm a teacher. Why can't I teach here?'

THAT IS how Iraqi refugee ASO (right) sums up his plight. Yet read papers like the *Sun* or the *Express* and you would think that asylum seekers are scroungers who are showered with housing and help. The media and many politicians try to turn refugees into "non-persons", a faceless, threatening, parasitical horde.

HELEN SHOOTER went to Salford in Manchester to talk to refugees and find out what their lives are really like. Pictures by JESS HURD



'I know not everyone is a racist'

SAEED is from Iraq. He has emergency leave to remain temporarily in Britain.

"Sometimes you get abuse from people when you are going round. Two weeks ago some teenagers attacked my friend. It really scared him.

"I don't think all English people are racist.

"But when people watch TV, read newspapers like the *Sun* or *Daily Express*, they see all that racism.

"I have noticed it more and more. They are linking us with terrorism."

Baryalai Hashimi, an Afghan refugee, added, "We get abuse on the streets. Some teenagers call us 'fucking Pakis'. How do I explain I am not even from Pakistan?"

Jalander Rohani, also from Afghanistan, points to the stain on the wall where an egg and beer bottles were thrown through the window by a gang of teenagers.

"There were two small children inside at the time," he said. "I know there are problems in this area for everyone. But we are not here for a holiday. It was a very bad situation in our lives that made us leave."

Long way from a 'life of luxury'

ARDIAN, aged 22, is from Albania. He has been living in accommodation provided by the government's National Asylum Support Service for over two years.

It is not a "luxury hotel". The boiler broke down on New Year's Eve and has not been fixed since.

That means there is no heating in this bitter weather. "I sleep in my clothes," says Ardian.

Water has been pouring through the kitchen ceiling. "We haven't used the kitchen for weeks because we were afraid of getting an electric shock," says Ardian.

He gets £29.89 a week to live on.

"I can do plastering. I wish I could be somebody here, somebody useful. Instead I waste years in this building."

ASO is 28 years old. He is an Iraqi Kurd.

“EVERYONE KNOWS the real situation in Iraq. The British government say this is such an evil regime that it is necessary to go to war.

On the other hand, they say it is safe for Iraqis who have fled persecution to return. We are targeted both ways.

Two months ago the British government issued me with a letter saying I had to leave this country.

I have no right to appeal.

They have stopped my benefits. I was living on £37 a week in vouchers. It was hardly enough. Now I have nothing.

I'm homeless and without any money. If my friend hadn't let me stay with him then I'd be on the streets in freezing weather.

I was a teacher of history in Iraq. I wish I could teach here.

I know that teachers are needed here. There is a shortage of doctors too.

My friend is a trained doctor. But he does not have a work permit.

The government talks about a refugee problem. This wasn't

created in Britain.

It will not be sorted out by making it harder for people to flee persecution.

Most of us are victims of dictatorships and oppression. I miss my family, my friends. One day I want to go back when the problems are sorted out.

We refugees are looked at as different creatures.

We know the media and politicians are trying to agitate people against us.

I know the horrible things the *Sun* says and the coupon they ask people to sign for us to be sent back.

Why are these people trying to make British people racist against us? Why do they use their training to cause hysteria amongst people? "Don't go out", they say. "Asylum seekers could rob you. They are terrorists."

But we are victims of terrorists. I left a terror regime.

I left Iraq because of threats to my life for things I have written and said.

I called my family. They are worried about what Saddam Hussein will do against the Kurds if



MOST REFUGEES suffer bad housing like in this Salford street (above). Mohammed (right) just wants a decent life for his children

there is a war. They are ready to flee to the mountains.

I think war on Iraq will make things worse. I want change in Iraq, but not this way—not by war.

There are a lot of problems in Britain—social spending, transport is very bad, people are poor.

All this is down to a few people fleeing persecution? Because the government used to pay me £37 a week, is that the real problem?"



MOST REFUGEES suffer bad housing like in this Salford street (above). Mohammed (right) just wants a decent life for his children

Sanctuary from the violence of Afghanistan

MOHAMMED AKRAM (above) holds his youngest daughter, Melissa.

She was born in Salford. His other daughters, born in Afghanistan, now go to

school locally and have made friends.

The eldest, Nadia, is studying to be a nurse.

She is marrying Mohammed Hoshang, who fled a Taliban attack on his town of

Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan when he was 15 years old.

He has not heard from his mother, father, four sisters and three brothers since that night.

He has leave to remain for four years and a work permit.

He works seven nights a week delivering food for a Chinese restaurant and a pizza takeaway.

EFFECTS OF IRAQ WAR

Catastrophe for a people

A POWERFUL open letter to Tony Blair recently appeared in two authoritative medical journals—the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*.

Some 500 staff, students and academics from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine had signed the letter, which urged Blair not to go to war.

The letter cited new reports which reveal the extent of the death, starvation, disease and suffering which will be the reality of any war on Iraq.

One report is written by health professionals from the Medact organisation, *Collateral Damage: The Health and Environmental Costs of War on Iraq*.

Nobody can be certain what will happen in any war, but the report uses accumulated evidence from Iraq and previous wars the US has fought to calculate the immediate and long term consequences of a war.

It argues that even a contained conflict against Iraq could cause between 48,000 and 260,000 deaths. A short war would cause long term injuries, health problems and environmental damage that could result in the deaths of another 200,000 people.

Impact

"The aftermath could include civil war, famine and epidemics, millions of refugees and displaced people, catastrophic effects on children's health and development, economic collapse."

The report examines the impact of the 1991 Gulf War and the punitive sanctions regime imposed on Iraq by the United Nations (UN).

Medact argues that the US-led war against Iraq, fought under the name of the UN, "wrought near apocalyptic results on the economic infrastructure of what had been a fairly highly urbanised and mechanised society".

US bombing killed between 50,000 and 120,000 Iraqi soldiers, most of them conscripts.

Between 3,500 and 15,000 civilians were killed, despite the claims by US and British leaders that "smart bombs" were only hitting military targets.

At least 300,000 Iraqi conscripts were injured.

Medact calculates that "110,000 Iraqi civilians died in 1991 from the health effects of the war, bringing the total number of Iraqis who died as a direct consequence of the Gulf War to around 205,000".

The war had a "catastrophic impact" on Iraq's infrastructure, environment and people. It created 1.8 million refugees.

"The massive displacement, squalid camps, malnutrition, harsh weather, inadequate shelter, lack of clean water and minimal healthcare led to many deaths.

"Infectious diseases were rife. By May 1991 between 15,000 and 30,000 refugees had died."

UN sanctions turned a dire situation into a disaster.

by HAZEL CROFT

By the late 1990s some 55 percent of the Iraqi population lived in poverty and 20 percent in extreme poverty, lacking electricity, water, food, medicines and basic education.

By 2002 between 344,000 and 525,000 children had died as a direct result of sanctions.

On top of this the US and Britain continued their bombing raids. "Between 1991 and 1999 the US and UK flew more than 6,000 sorties, dropped over 1,800 bombs and hit more than 450 targets," says the report.

Medact argues that this means a new war would be "much more intense and destructive than the 1991 Gulf War."

"The mental and physical health of ordinary Iraqis is far worse than it was in 1991, making them much more vulnerable, and even less able to muster the resources needed for recovery and reconstruction."

The development of deadlier US weapons like "bunker busters" will only increase the civilian casualties.

Medact estimates that the US will spend between \$50 and \$200 billion on inflicting this carnage on Iraq, and up to \$20 billion annually on occupying the country.

Kill

Yet "\$100 billion is enough to fund meeting the health needs of the world's poorest people for four years".

It concludes, "Even a 'best case' scenario of a limited war of short duration, perhaps comparable to 1991, would have a much greater impact on the Iraqi people and would initially kill three times the number who died on September 11."

Medact's findings are backed up by a leaked document produced by a UN body.

Its "strictly confidential" document headed "Likely Humanitarian Scenarios" suggests that over three million people will suffer malnutrition if the war goes ahead.

These reports graphically reveal the reality of war which lies behind Bush and Blair's rhetoric. They are a powerful argument about why we must do everything we can to stop them.

Collateral Damage: The Health and Environmental Costs of War on Iraq is available at www.medact.org/tbx/pages/sub.cfm?id=556

The internal UN document is available from the Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq at www.casi.org.uk/info/undocs/war021210.pdf

How we beat the Nazis last time round

THE BRITISH National Party (BNP) hopes to make wider gains after getting council seats in Burnley, Blackburn and now Halifax.

The Nazis want to start establishing the kind of strength their counterparts in Europe like Le Pen's National Front have achieved.

Ten years ago the BNP Nazis thought they were on the brink of such a breakthrough in Britain.

In September 1993 they won a council by-election in a previously safe Labour seat on the Isle of Dogs in east London.

The following May they were confident of not only holding this seat, but of winning many more and establishing themselves as

a significant force.

Mainstream pundits and media commentators shared that belief. "They are all mine here in east London," the Nazi councillor Derek Beackon boasted.

But the Nazis were stopped.

They won no more council seats. Beackon and his Nazi minders were humiliated and slunk away, utterly dejected, when he too lost his seat. In the months afterwards the Nazis were beaten back across east London.

***Socialist Worker* spoke to five people who were involved at the heart of the fight, and looks at the lessons we can draw for the urgent task of beating the Nazis back today.**

SIAN BARRETT was the Anti Nazi League organiser on the Isle of Dogs

"I FELT really devastated when the Nazis won. You felt really apprehensive.

But we had to fight. The first thing was to connect with people in the area who were anti-Nazi but felt isolated and lacked confidence.

We started knocking on doors. That was quite intimidating, especially when at first it was only a few of us. We weren't sure what response we'd get.

We had to start doing things even with a few people, then we found people in the area who would join in and things grew from there.

We got a good response from most people. Even when we met people who had voted for the BNP we could argue with most of them.

They had only had lies from the BNP, and you had to stand your ground and put over the truth.

It was important that we met and organised in the area where the Nazis were trying to build. This sent a message that we belonged there, and weren't going away.

Once we started to get young people involved, that gave everything a real energy. We had anti-Nazi raves and young people would go away with stickers and have discussions in the schools and colleges.

By the time the Nazis were beaten the area was covered with stickers and posters. We had reclaimed the area.

Today we have to take on the Nazis in areas like Halifax. It won't be easy. The most important thing is to start doing small things and build the momentum."

JOHN McLOUGHLIN is the chair of the Tower Hamlets council Unison branch in east London

"YES, THE first reaction was shock. We were fortunate in that the day afterwards the council management called a meeting at which someone suggested a protest walkout. That really lifted people.

From that we forced the council to agree that no council worker had to deal directly with the Nazi councillor.

Every time he went to a council meeting there were anti-Nazi protests. That was important in showing that the BNP was not just a part of the normal democratic process.

In the council we produced anti-Nazi stickers. Lots of workers wore them and that built confidence. We signed up hundreds of people to Council Workers Against the Nazis.

One of the key things was the sense of unity against the BNP. We built an attitude that the labour movement would not tolerate the Nazis.

TUC leader John Monks and GMB leader John Edmonds came to the Isle of Dogs and talked to shop stewards. From that came the 50,000-strong TUC march, which was marvellous.

We also took up issues the Nazis were trying to play on such as housing. We had protests outside empty luxury flats and offices, and pointed out the real reasons for lack of decent affordable housing in the area."

***Socialist Worker's* PAUL McGARR lives on the Isle of Dogs**

"SOME PEOPLE painted a picture of the area as a "no-go" area for anti-racists, as though it was full of Nazis.

That was nonsense. The vast majority of people were against the Nazis.

You had to be on the streets and estates where the Nazis had won support.

Leafleting is a start, but you have to knock on doors and speak face to face with people.

It wasn't enough just to expose the BNP as Nazis.

People were right to be angry about rotten housing, angry about cuts, angry that people in power didn't care. If you don't start from sharing that anger you won't get anywhere.

Some people had been conned into blaming Asians instead of those really responsible. You had to stand and argue this face to face. It wasn't always easy but it was necessary.

You also had to fight over the issues people were angry about. The council tried to close our local community centre.

The BNP councillor saw it as a golden opportunity. But because we had built in the community we were able to exclude him from the campaign meetings and lead a fight which saved the centre.

I remember one small incident. A disabled man was desperate because the council hadn't done work to make his flat suitable. He turned to the BNP councillor.

Fortunately we met the man too. We

said what the BNP really stood for.

We also organised a campaign, phoned the council and told them that unless the work was done we'd occupy the council offices. The council did the work. The man told the BNP to piss off and joined the Anti Nazi League."

MARTIN SMITH is a former east London Socialist Workers Party organiser

"I REMEMBER the shock and paralysis when the Nazis won. People were stunned. The Nazis were cocky.

We knew that the majority of people in east London weren't Nazis. But you only felt it when we started going out into the workplaces and communities.

Just as today, there was a crisis in the centre of politics.

The Tory government was in crisis. On the Isle of Dogs you had a massive transformation, with Canary Wharf, the Thatcherite wealth-dream all around. But the reality for working class people was run-down estates, insecurity.

Locally you had the Liberals openly playing the race card too. Many individual Labour Party members and councillors



LOCAL PEOPLE and trade unionists join the TUC's "Unite against racism" demonstration (top and middle), and protest against Nazi Beackon's first council meeting (bottom)

Pictures: MARK CAMPBELL

were excellent. But there were some Labour councillors and leading figures in the area who pandered to racism.

The key was finding all the people who were against the Nazis and uniting them, despite all our other differences, in a single campaign directed to one end—beating the BNP.

We also had to confront the Nazis directly. This stopped them getting the respectability they craved. We had to disrupt Nazi meetings, disrupt council meetings when Beackon turned up, and protest everywhere they tried to organise.

I remember one case when we had health workers and local tenants leafleting in a local market. About 60 Nazis turned up to abuse us.

Firefighters came out of their station to join us with an anti-Nazi banner. We

stood up to the Nazis, and suddenly they started sieg-heiling. People standing around gasped.

Confronting them rips the mask off and exposes what these people really are."

HUSSAIN ISMAIL was a local community activist

"IN THE run-up to the BNP getting in the level of racist attacks grew.

Days before Beackon won Quddus Ali, a young Bengali, was beaten into a coma. Later on Mukhtar Ahmed was also beaten to within an inch of his life. The climate was awful.

There was huge anger in the local Bengali community and we had to help reflect that anger. There was a militant protest outside the hospital where Quddus had been taken.

In the month after the BNP got in racist attacks in the area doubled. The Nazis went on a rampage down Brick Lane, in the heart of the Bengali community, smashing windows.

It was important that we mobilised, black, white and Asian, to say we wouldn't stand for it.

The weekend after the BNP won 1,000 people drove the Nazis from the paper sale they had maintained at the top of Brick Lane for years, and which had been a real insult. They never came back. It was an important victory.

One argument we had to have with some people was that you couldn't just beat the Nazis by mobilising in the Bengali community or by campaigning in areas where the Nazis had little or no base.

We had to unite people—black, white and Asian—and take the fight into the mainly white working class areas where the Nazis had managed to gain a hearing.

We had to counter the Nazi lies, argue with people about who was responsible for the problems they faced, and insist that we had to all unite against our real enemies."

How we can do it again

WHEREVER the BNP seeks to build today we need the kind of campaign seen in east London in the 1990s.

Local elections will be taking place in May in many areas.

But the time for action is now.

The key is to get into the heart of the areas the BNP is targeting and begin building the local political forces which can challenge them.

In the coming days and weeks some urgent steps need to be taken.

For example, a few individuals can take the initiative to launch anti-war activity—street stalls, petitioning door to door, calling meetings.

That can draw together networks of people. Most of these

people will be anti-Nazi. Some may have been conned by the BNP but can be won away from it in the course of a united anti-war campaign.

That kind of campaign will highlight where the real blame lies for the problems working people in Britain face.

Building a network in the coming weeks can lay the basis for wider campaigns in the months ahead.

That means drawing together united anti-Nazi campaigns of local people focused sharply on the areas the BNP targets.

It also means finding those people in each area who are ready to take up and fight over the issues affecting people's lives which the Nazis seek to feed off.

in my view

Night of the living dead

QUESTION TIME is the kind of TV show that spends much of the year trying to drum up support for itself.

Anxious trails from David Dimbleby tell us that we'll be lucky enough to hear the views of a panel made up of cold sponges, wet towels and old flannels.

It's as if he's warning us not to switch over to *Newsnight* or we'll miss hearing from someone as thrilling as Margaret Beckett—a politician sadly afflicted by a strange illness.

She's wasted away so much that she is now nothing but a small mouthpiece.

Her face, pale and lined, drained of life, speaks of some unvoiced tragedy, as if she's whispering to her party leadership, "I said all I was asked to say and still you cast me aside."

In case you can't imagine the extent to which the politicians who come on that show mouth the party line, I have inside information.

I've been on radio's *Any Questions*.

Sitting next to me sometime before New Labour got in was Margaret Hodge. At that time she was busy shedding any leftish clothes still sticking to her from her time on Islington council.

This meant losing her energetic, directorial manner, and taking on the monotone of middle management.

To help her she had cue cards given to her from Labour HQ.

That was the week (you'll have forgotten it) the broadsheets were saying Tony Blair had revealed New Labour's "philosophy". Philosophy? What this amounted to was "community".

As New Labour prepares to lay waste to Baghdad, break the firefighters, hand London Underground over to rogue traders and stream education from top to bottom, we don't hear the word "community" too often.

Energetic wrestle

But back in those days Margaret Hodge knew about it. She had the word on her central office cue cards—underlined.

So whatever question came up, she chipped in with a quick "community". The political sophistication of it all was staggering.

In a time of crisis, *Question Time* gets more interesting. Last week, there was an energetic wrestle between George Galloway and Barbara Cartland.

Oh no, she's dead, isn't she? Well, being dead is no obstacle to being on the programme.

Look at that Minister for Killing Iraqis—a grey faced loon called O'Brien. Watch out for him in the next few weeks.

He's the kind of man who makes a morgue seem like a good place to go on a Friday night.

But also on the programme was a smooth-tongued Thatcherite worm called Jenkin.

Desperately disappointed that New Labour is as keen on bombing children as he is, he was delighted to find a position more to the right on asylum seekers.

He made one comment that seemed to float by unnoticed—a comment that chilled me.

Here it is: "People who live in areas where they have high ethnic populations begin to feel genuinely afraid about who's living in their area."

I get the drift. White people (who are real people) are entitled to be afraid of ethnic populations (who are not people) who are living in white people's areas.

The question being discussed was about asylum seekers. In a flash this slipped into talk of terrorists and Hepatitis B.

In the midst of that no one noticed that Jenkin had moved the subject on to saying that what white people really have to worry about is anyone who isn't white.

What worries me is that someone like Jenkin is living in the area of my TV.

by **MICHAEL ROSEN**

anti-war

Accusing past and present wars

BUSH AND Blair's plans to attack Iraq will create devastation and kill thousands of civilians.

We are unlikely to be shown the full extent of the horror while the war goes on. But there have been many films, books and songs that have shown the true face of war and protested against it.

MATTHEW COOKSON looks at some of the best of these.

FILMS

Three Kings stars George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg and Ice Cube as three US soldiers who become disillusioned by the last Gulf War.

They help the people who have been abandoned by George Bush Sr.

This is a funny and subtle look at the injustice of US foreign policy.

Born on the Fourth of July is a film about Ron Kovic, the Vietnam War veteran who in the course of the war goes from being a fighter for the US to an anti-war activist.

Directed by Oliver Stone and with Tom Cruise as Kovic, this is not the usual Hollywood look at Vietnam.

Kovic continues to be a



THREE KINGS



THE FIRST World War created horror on a scale never seen before

major figure in the anti-war movement in the US.

The Officers' Ward is a film about the horrors of the First World War.

It is set in a ward that looks after officers who have been disfigured during the war. It explores how they come to reclaim their humanity.

Dr Strangelove, Stanley Kubrick's apocalyptic comedy was released at the height of the Cold War in the 1960s. It takes an absurd look at the dangers of nuclear war.

An insane US general orders a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union, convinced that the Russians are contaminating "our precious

bodily fluids".

The 1937 film by Jean Renoir *La Grande Illusion* is set in two German prisoner of war camps during the First World War.

It looks at the attempts to escape by two French prisoners.

The Nazis declared it "Cinematographic Enemy Number One".

BOOKS

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Remarque is a classic anti-war novel that conveys the horror and exposes the myths of the First World War.

It blames the kings, ministers, financiers and bosses who forced ordinary people

to kill one another.

The *Regeneration* trilogy by Pat Barker shows the effects the First World War had on the soldiers who fought it. There is also a film based on the book.

The American War by Jonathan Neale takes its title from the way the Vietnamese describe their struggle against the US.

It tells the story of how a superpower was humbled by mass resistance inside Vietnam, a huge anti-war movement at home and the disillusionment of US soldiers.

Andrew and Patrick Cockburn's *Saddam Hussein: An American Obsession* explores the way that the West has always tried to control the oil-rich Iraq.



Socialist Worker's Stop the War on Iraq is a cheap and accessible pamphlet which goes through all the arguments against Bush and Blair's war drive.

Most of the books are available from Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to www.bookmarks.uk.com

Top ten songs to protest to

by **YURI PRASAD**

1 "What's Going On"—Marvin Gaye: From the *What's Going On* album that the head of Motown initially refused to release, fearing it was too political.

*Mother, mother, there's too many of you crying
Brother, brother, brother,
there's far too many of you dying
You know we've got to find a way
To bring some lovin' here today, hey
Father, father, we don't need to escalate
You see, war is not the answer, for only love can conquer hate
You know we've got to find a way
To bring some lovin' here today*

2 "Why Can't We Live Together?"—Jimmy Thomas: Beautiful vocals set against simple keyboards made this an instant classic in 1972.

3 "Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos"—Public Enemy: Chuck D receives a letter calling him up to the army and refuses to serve. From jail he leads a prison revolt.

4 "The Eagle and the Bear"—Linton Kwesi Johnson: While Margaret Thatcher brought US cruise missiles to Britain, dub poet Linton expressed the popular fear of nuclear war.

5 "Rock the Casbah"—The Clash: Today Bush and Blair denounce Iraq and ignore the crimes of their allies in the region. The Clash exposed them back in 1982.

6 "Ohio"—The Isley Brothers: In 1970 the US Na-

tional Guard killed four anti-war protesters at Kent State University. Neil Young wrote this cry of anger, but the Isleys did the best version.

*Tin soldiers and Nixon's coming
We're finally on our own
This summer I hear the drumming
Four dead in Ohio
Gotta get down to it
Soldiers are gunning us down
Should have been done long ago
What if you knew that girl and
Found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know*

7 "War"—Edwin Starr: No one thought Edwin's music political until he stormed to number one in the US with his 1970 classic.

8 "Armageddon Time"—Willie Williams—Punk helped a whole generation to find the radical tradition of Jamaican music.

9 "We Need a Revolution"—Dead Prez: This is an uncompromising hip-hop assault on the system that breeds war and poverty.

*I'm tired a strugglin
I'm tired a strugglin
The system ain't gon' change
Unless we make it change
The White House is the rock house
Uncle Sam is the motherfuckin pusher man
What I gotta do to make sure you understand?*

10 "Enemy of the Enemy"—Asian Dub Foundation: Combining hip-hop beats with Indian percussion and the spirit of punk, ADF take on the warmongers.

meetings, forums and events | tel: 020 7538 5821 | e-mail: forums@socialistworker.co.uk

IF YOUR AREA ISN'T SHOWN PHONE THE NUMBER ABOVE



where

we

stand

Big ideas in informal settings

Marxist forums

ALTRINCHAM
Can war lead to revolution?
Wed 19 Feb, 4.30pm,
Altrincham Library.

BARNSELEY
Does the media control public opinion?
Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Library, Shambles St.

BIRMINGHAM HANDSWORTH
After the World Social Forum: is there an alternative to capitalism?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Summerfield Community Centre.
With Chris Harman.

BIRMINGHAM SPARKHILL
What's the solution in the Middle East? Eyewitness report from Palestine
Thu 6 Feb, 7pm,
Shahenshah, Ladypool Rd.
With Caroline Johnson.

BLACKWOOD
Racism, rap, guns and violence
Mon 10 Feb, 7.15pm,
Blackwood Miners Institute.
With Martin Chapman.

BOLTON
How do we fight fascism?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Green Room, Bolton Library.

BRISTOL MONTPELIER
Drugs, guns and racism: what's the solution?
Wed 19 Feb, 7pm,
Bristolian Cafe (top of Picton St).
With Bruce George.

BURNLEY
What lies behind the US drive to war?
Tue 11 Feb, 7.30pm,
Shalamar, Church St.

CAMBRIDGE
Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
CB2, Norfolk St.

CHELTENHAM
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East
Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Francis Close Hall, University of Gloucester, St Paul's Rd.

CHESTERFIELD
Can the trade unions challenge capitalism?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Assembly Rooms,
Market Sq.
With Dick Pitt.

COLCHESTER
Why is war central to capitalism?
Mon 10 Feb, 8pm,
RAD Hall, Southway.

DONCASTER
Does the media control our ideas?
Wed 12 Feb, 7pm,
The Point, South Parade.

DUDLEY
Palestine: can it ever be free?
Thu 20 Feb, 8pm,
Claughton Community Centre,
Blowers Green.

EXETER
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Wed 26 Feb, 6pm,
Dinosaur Cafe
(by clock tower).

HARLOW
Who was Rosa Luxemburg?
Wed 12 Feb, 8pm,
Polly's Pantry, Wych Elm.
With Belinda Affat.

LEEDS BEESTON
What is the grand strategy of the American Empire?
Wed 19 Feb, 7pm,
Tunstall Road Community Centre.

LEEDS HAREHILLS
What is the grand strategy of the American Empire?
Wed 19 Feb, 8pm,
Pakistani Community Centre.

LEEDS HEADINGLEY
Does the media control our ideas?
Thu 6 Feb, 6.30pm,
Delicatessen Coffee Bar,
Hyde Park

LEICESTER
Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?
Mon 17 Feb, 7.30pm,
Cafe Mozart, London Rd.
With Chris Nineham.

LINCOLN
Blood and oil: the history of the Middle East
Tue 18 Feb, 6pm,
Nourish,
1 Newlands.



REVOLUTION 2003

A student teach-in to build the resistance to capitalism & war


28 February-2 March

SPEAKERS include

George Galloway MP
Federico Tommasiello NEC Giovani Comunista
Jonathan Neale author *The American War: Vietnam*
Prof Alex Callinicos author *Anti-Capitalist Manifesto*
Lindsey German Stop the War Coalition
Asad Rehman ESF Coordinating Group
Linda Smith London Region FBU
Mark Seddon editor *Tribune*
Helen Salmon NUS NEC member

For info and bookings:
Phone 020 7515 2646
E-mail swss@swp.org.uk
Web www.swp.org.uk/swss

Hosted by the Socialist Worker Student Society at the London School of Economics



MANCHESTER CHORLTON
Vietnam: when a mass movement stopped a war
Mon 24 Feb, 7.30pm,
Chorlton Library.

MANCHESTER RUSHOLME
Why does capitalism breed war?
Thu 20 Feb, 6.30pm,
Jaffa Restaurant, Wilmslow Rd.

MANCHESTER WITHINGTON
The bloody history of British imperialism
Wed 26 Feb, 6.30pm,
Withington Library, Wilmslow Rd.

NEWCASTLE HEATON
The bloody history of the British Empire
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Chillingham,
Chillingham Rd.

NEWCASTLE WEST END
Is the state neutral?
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Linwood Centre
(off West Rd).

NEWPORT
Che Guevara
Thu 18 Feb, 7.30pm,
USR Room, Newport Centre.

NOTTINGHAM HYSON GREEN
Is racism getting worse?
Thu 13 Feb, 7pm,
Forestfield Community Centre,
Sturton St.

NOTTINGHAM SHERWOOD
Drugs, guns and pop culture
Tue 11 Feb, 7.30pm,
Katmandu, Mansfield Rd.
With Martin Smith.

OLDHAM
Can war lead to revolution?
Thu 13 Feb, 7pm,
West Indian Community Centre,
Horsedge St.
With Martin Smith.

OXFORD
Advertising the body: why sexism sells
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Reservoir Books Cafe,
St Aldate's.

PLYMOUTH
After 15 February: how can we stop the war?
Mon 17 Feb, 7.30pm,
Martinsgate Centre,
Bretonside
(back of Staples superstore).

PRESTON
Vietnam: when US imperialism was humbled
Tue 11 Feb, 7.30pm, Unity
Community Centre, Shepherd St
(off Church St).

READING
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Mon 10 Feb, 7.30pm, Reading
International Solidarity Centre.
With Julie Waterson.

ST ALBANS
How do we stop their wars?
Mon 17 Feb, 7.30pm,
upstairs, Trinity Church (cnr
Beaconsfield Rd/Victoria St).
With Michael Bradley.

SCUNTHORPE
Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Mon 17 Feb, 7pm,
Central Community Centre,
Lindum St (opp bus station).
With Nick Howard.

SHEFFIELD CITY CENTRE
Globalisation and the working class
Thu 6 Feb, 6pm,
Coffee Revolution, Church St.
With Angela Shann.

SHEFFIELD NETHER EDGE
Can war lead to revolution?
Sat 22 Feb, 7.30pm, TC's
internet cafe, Abbeydale Rd.

SHEFFIELD PARK HILL
Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Thu 13 Feb, 6pm,
Bard Street Community Centre.

SHEFFIELD SHARROW
Palestine: can it ever be free?
Thu 13 Feb, 7.30pm,
Highfields Library, London Rd.

SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY WORKERS
Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Wed 19 Feb, 1pm,
The Moors, Sheffield University
Student Union.

SOUTHAMPTON
The state: should we bypass it or do we have to confront it?
Thu 6 Feb, 8pm,
Cook House, St Mary's St.

SUTTON COLDFIELD
Vietnam: when a superpower was humbled
Sat 8 Feb, 3pm,
Three Tuns Hotel, Hollyfield Rd.

SWINDON
Che Guevara: more than a revolutionary icon?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Eastcott Hill. *With Chris Bambery.*

TWICKENHAM
War: what is it good for?
Thu 6 Feb, 8pm,
ETNA Community Centre,
Rosslyn St.

WALSALL
Palestine: can it be free?
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Palfrey Community Centre,
Maltor St. *With Azra Jabbar.*

WATFORD
Why capitalism underdevelops Africa
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Costa Coffee, High St.

YORK
Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?
Wed 19 Feb, 8pm,
Priory Street Centre.

FORUMS IN LONDON

ACTON
Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
West London Trade Union Club,
Acton High St. *With Andy Brown.*

BARKING
Malcolm X and the fight for black liberation
Thu 13 Feb, 7.30pm,
Barking Library (rear doors).

BRENT
Is rap responsible for the rise in gun crime?
Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Willesden Library,
Willesden High St.

CLAPHAM & STOCKWELL
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Tue 18 Feb, 7.30pm,
Venn Street Community Centre.

CROYDON
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
Spice Cafe, Surrey St.

DULWICH
Is violence ever justified?
Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, upstairs
meeting room, Dulwich Leisure
Centre, East Dulwich Rd.

ELEPHANT & WALWORTH
Empire: the bloody history of British imperialism
Mon 10 Feb, 7.30pm,
Pullens Centre, 184 Crampton St.

ELTHAM
Imperialism and the Middle East
Tue 11 Feb, 7.30pm,
St Mary's Community Centre,
Eltham High St.

ENFIELD
Does the media control public opinion?
Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Edmonton Green Leisure Centre,
Plevna Rd. *With Tony Phillips.*

EUSTON
Is rap responsible for the rise in gun crime?
Tue 11 Feb, 6.30pm,
Cafe Deco, Store St (off Gower St).

FINSBURY PARK
Divide and rule: why we say don't blame asylum seekers
Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm,
Gadz Cafe, 45 Clifton Terrace
(opp Finsbury Park ☺).

HOMERTON
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Wed 19 Feb, 7.30pm,
Barnabas Centre, Homerton High
St (nr Homerton Hospital).

ILFORD
Is rap responsible for a rise in gun crime?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Kohi-Noor, 50-52 Ilford Lane.

LADBROKE GROVE
The Black Panthers
Tue 18 Feb, 7.30pm, Green
Room, Paddington Arts Centre,
Woodfield Rd.

LEWISHAM
The Black Panthers
Wed 12 Feb, 7pm, Hunkarim
Restaurant, Lee High Rd.

LONDON FIELDS
Can the US Empire be stopped?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Queensbridge Sport and
Community Centre, Holly St.
With Charlie Kimber.

MILE END
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Mon 10 Feb, 7pm,
Orange Rooms Cafe, Burdett Rd.

MUSWELL HILL
Can Islam change the world?
Thu 13 Feb, 7.30pm, Sasa Thai
Restaurant. *With Sam Ashman.*

NEW CROSS
The Battle of Algiers: film showing
Tue 11 Feb, 6.30pm,
Moonbow Jakes Coffee Bar, New
Cross Rd. *With Moira Nolan.*

STREATHAM
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Boogalu's, Sunnyside Rd.

WALTHAMSTOW
Sport and business: can the two be separated?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Quaker Meeting House, Jewel Rd.
With Jo Cardwell.

WATERLOO
Why capitalism creates war and how we can stop it
Wed 19 Feb, 6pm,
Capital Kebabs,
The Cut (nr Young Vic).

WEST NORWOOD
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Bar 196, 196 Norwood Rd (nr
Tulse Hill ➡). *With Paul Holborow.*

WOOLWICH
The state: do we confront it or should we bypass it?
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
upstairs, Earl of Chatham,
Thomas St. *With Ian Birchall.*



where

we

stand

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION
The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overturned.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD
The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM
The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbians and gays.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

Join the socialists

Fill in this form and send it to
PO Box 82, London E3 3LH

Name	E-mail
Address	
Postcode	
TU/college/school	Phone

Links

Anti Nazi League
www.anl.org.uk
(020 7924 0333)

Globalise Resistance
www.resist.org.uk
(020 7053 2071)

Stop the War Coalition
www.stopwar.org.uk
(020 7053 2155/6)

Socialist Alliance
www.socialistalliance.net
(020 7791 3138)

Defend Council Housing
www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk
(020 7987 9989)

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers
www.defend-asylum.org
(07941 566 183)

Spark
(07905 998 675)

Scottish Socialist Party
(0141 221 7714)

Local SWP

Barnsley
07881 558 590

Birmingham
07949 028 362

Black Country
07941 834 125

Bradford
07811 403 299

Brighton
07808 368 551

Bristol
07711 718 519

Cambridge
07950 142 464

Camden & Islington
07961 337 640

Cardiff
07815 775 819

Central London
07957 316 094

Chesterfield
07881 558 590

Coventry
07712 047 873

East Anglia
07946 269 024

East London
07753 697 743

Exeter
07939 558 115

Hackney
07788 770 741

Home Counties
07905 589 865

Kent
07950 610 257

Lancashire East
07968 952 180

Lancashire West
07931 725 633

Leeds & West Yorkshire
07719 497 968

Manchester
07946 413 763

Merseyside
07951 241 562

Norwich
07733 137 201

Nottingham
07956 477 778

Plymouth
07803 620 390

Portsmouth
07801 290 411

Scotland (SW Platform)
07855 023 739

Sheffield
07905 678 506

South East London
07951 737 003

South London
07939 017 973

Southampton
07811 210 036

Swansea
07759 901 392

Thames Valley
07929 618 579

Tyneside
07748 653 627

Waltham Forest
07796 697 271

West London
07958 996 777

York
07984 132 371

Lobby sends message to New Labour

We will fight for council housing

AROUND 1,800 council tenants and trade unionists descended on parliament from across Britain last week.

The lobby and accompanying rally had been called by the Defend Council Housing organisation, which is at the heart of the fight to stop New Labour privatising council housing.

The protest was also backed by tenants' federations around the country, and key national trade unions including Unison, Ucat, the TGWU and the GMB.

A growing number of local councillors and MPs are throwing their weight behind the campaign. Over 100 MPs have signed a parliamentary motion backing the key demands of the campaign.

Labour MP Austin Mitchell opened the rally, on Wednesday of last week in Westminster's Central Hall, with a simple message to the government: "Stop this campaign to get rid of council housing."

Alan Walter of Defend Council Housing told the rally, "There are 6 million council tenants and lots more people who need council housing."

"Council housing makes sense. This fight is not just for existing tenants. It's for our children, for the homeless, for people who thought they were buying a home and all they've got is a mortgage to try and keep paying."

Alan pointed out that the pressure of the campaign, including a string of no votes by tenants in ballots on privatisation, had already seen the government come up with new schemes.

This involves handing council homes over to a council-controlled company called an ALMO instead

by **PAUL McGARR**

of outright privatisation.

He warned that ALMOs are a halfway house to privatisation: "It's part of the same privatisation strategy. We must reject it and fight for investment in council homes without strings."

Jack Dromey, TGWU national organiser, argued, "The government wants to privatise the bulk of the council housing stock. It's wrong. We want proper investment in council housing funded out of taxation."

He pointed out that the government is prepared to write off hundreds of millions of pounds a year in debts for councils that privatise: "If they can do that, why can't they do the same for tenants who want to stay with councils?"

Scandal

Labour MP Gerald Kaufman, who was a housing minister in the 1970s Labour government, warned, "Housing associations are completely unaccountable. Local authority housing departments are not perfect, but they are accountable."

"I am against any transfer to housing associations or the private sector."

"It's a scandal that we are the fourth richest country in the world while people live in overcrowded accommodation or struggle to find affordable homes," said Unison general secretary Dave Prentis.

"We need to fight for decent, secure, democratically accountable council housing, not as a last resort but for all who need it."

One of the biggest cheers went to striking firefighters who joined the platform.

London firefighter Neale Williams won a standing ovation when he backed the demand for investment in council housing.

"No firefighter in London can afford to buy a house here," he said. "Is it too radical to demand that firefighters should be able to live among the communities they serve?"

He won more applause when he argued, "This government says it has no money for the firefighters or council housing, yet it has billions to bomb Iraq in a war that nobody wants."

"The shortage of teachers, nurses and other public sector workers in many areas of the country is directly linked to the lack of affordable housing," said new TUC deputy general secretary Frances O'Grady.

"The government must invest in council housing."

Birmingham tenant Frank Chance won an ovation when he talked of last year's no vote by tenants which sank the plan to privatise the city's council homes:

"Our victory was a victory for every tenant and trade unionist who got out on the streets. We don't want the return of Rachmanism. We want affordable, decent homes."

Eileen Short of Defend Council Housing summed up the rally: "We are clear what we are against—the selling off of our homes."

"But we are also clear what we are for—investment in good quality council housing. We want it now."

The lobby took place as deputy prime minister John Prescott prepared to announce his review of housing finance.

Eileen argued that across Britain people should campaign for



TRADE UNION members and tenants want investment in council housing not war

local councils and councillors to back the demands of the lobby: "Get every council to sign up."

Outside the hall tenants who had travelled from across Britain hurried to lobby their MPs, demanding that they press the government to halt its privatisation drive and instead put public money into council housing.

They felt that the size of the lobby, and the wide backing the campaign was winning, could make a real difference.

"It was very good coming down here today," said Mandy Bailey, a tenant from Banbury Cross in Oxfordshire.

"We are facing a privatisation ballot and we are campaigning for

a no vote.

"But we are also here because we don't just want to say no, but make clear to this government what we want instead."

■ Get your council or councillor to back the six demands of the lobby. For details go to www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk or phone 020 7987 9989.

Police guilty of racism, violence and lying

POLICE OFFICERS racially abused and violently assaulted a black man in Brixton, south London, a judge ruled last week.

Sylbert Farquharson, aged 57, was awarded record damages of nearly £250,000.

Judge Dean said Sylbert was "subjected to explicit racist abuse in the street, and a particularly vicious and cowardly form of racist abuse at the police station."

"The officers felt obliged to invent an account of the events which they knew to be untrue in order to justify their actions."

Sylbert is still partially paralysed from the attack in July 1995. The handcuffs caused permanent damage to his wrists.

He now has chronic pain syndrome. *It took his civil action against Metropolitan Police chief John Stevens to force the police to suspend two officers on Monday of this week, seven years after the event.*

Three of the officers were involved in seven other civil actions successfully brought against the Met.

The details of the attack were revealed in court.

Sylbert, then a van driver, had been

by **HELEN SHOOTER**

delivering bread when he saw his cousin Steve being handcuffed outside a cafe in Stockwell, near Brixton.

Steve had gone to the aid of the cafe owner, who had been falsely accused of carrying drugs.

Sylbert went over to his cousin only to be told to go away by officers. As he left the scene officers targeted him for a stop and search.

"They were like wild dogs," said Sylbert after the court hearing last week.

"I was put in a neck hold, and was picked up and thrown to the ground."

He described how an officer knelt on his back and called him "a fucking black bastard". One of the officers used the handcuffs "like a saw, and my hands were cut and bloodied. I can't describe the pain I was suffering."

"It was a burning sensation of an intensity I have never felt before."

Sylbert told how the officers debated what to do with his shoe, which had fallen off, at Brixton police station.

He told of how one said, "He's a fucking coon. Let's give him a fucking tail," and the shoe was attached to the

back of my trousers."

Sylbert and his cousin were later prosecuted on trumped-up charges. The case against them was thrown out of court by a magistrate.

The case shows the reality of institutional racism, the charge the Macpherson report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence laid against the Met in 1999.

David Blunkett rubbished the idea of institutional racism as "a slogan which missed the point" only last month.

Tell that to Sylbert. He was a victim of police racism. It took him seven years to get any justice.

In brief

A lesson in not weighting

NIVERSITIES and higher education colleges across London are closed on Tuesday as lecturers and admin and manual workers continued their campaign for a decent London weighting payment.

The unions involved—at the AUT, Amicus and nison—are claiming a London weighting payment of £4,000.

The unions were organising London weighting battle bus tours round the picket lines, and pickets were to lobby the department of education.

An admin worker from London Metropolitan University told *Socialist Worker*, “There are 30 people outside the university but the buildings are totally shut down.”

“There are no lectures and no libraries open.”

Workers gearing up for a strike

EUGEOT CAR workers in Coventry are set to strike over pay.

Each shift will take part in a 4-hour strike planned to take place next week, over Thursday 13 to Friday 14 February.

The strike plan follows a 53 per cent majority vote for action in response to a pay offer of 7.3 per cent over two years.

Peugeot workers are the lowest paid in the car industry. Union leaders are hoping that the threat of strike action will produce a new pay offer.

But one TGWU union member at the factory told *Socialist Worker*, “We were led to believe that there would be a series of one-day actions each week but the officials seem to be pussyfooting around.”

GERRY JONES

Bosses thrown into reverse

STRIKE ACTION by bus drivers in Norwich has forced the multinational First Group to retreat from its attack on working hours.

The 350 drivers held a solid week-long strike last month after management increased their driving time.

The company’s climbdown means the drivers cannot work for longer than four hours and 15 minutes without a break. It has also reinstated the drivers’ aid breaks, backdated to October last year.

Drivers voted by 201 to 50 in favour of the deal.

“We feel good that our strike forced this from the company,” said driver Dave Anningham. “Drivers’ confidence has gone up.”

Deal fails test of probation

UNDREDS OF probation workers walked out on strike on a day on Wednesday of last week in several areas of Britain.

The action involved workers employed by local probation boards in Cumbria, Hertfordshire, North Wales, South Wales, Staffordshire, Surrey, Leicestershire and Thames Valley.

Other regions had also been due to strike in a national dispute over workloads, but suspended strikes after reaching agreement with their local boards.

The deals which headed off some strikes are better in some areas than in others.

In the eight areas still in dispute the staff, members of the probation workers’ union, now plan a work to rule and more one-day strikes.

SHARON PRICE, chair South Yorkshire Napo

Civil servants

Fighting for more control

OVER 270,000 members of the PCS civil servants’ union were to start a crucial vote over the future of their union from Friday this week.

The vote is on whether to increase democracy in the PCS by having annual national executive elections and conferences.

This is a key opportunity to increase union members’ control over their leaders.

Socialist Mark Serwotka won the election for general secretary of the PCS in December 2000.

The misnamed “Moderate” group, which still dominates the union’s leadership, tried to sack Serwotka last May.

A members’ revolt and a High Court decision stopped them.

The “Moderate” run national executive is calling on union members to reject

by MATTHEW COOKSON

more democracy.

They want to hold on to their position for another year in the hope people will forget they launched a coup attempt.

They are continuing their campaign against Mark Serwotka.

Annual

Union members see the ballot as a chance to back up Mark Serwotka and president Janice Godrich and get rid of the right wing clique for good.

Last year’s union conference overwhelmingly backed annual executive elections and conferences.

Activists are planning to get the message out to as many people as possible in

the next few days.

They want to make sure the left doesn’t repeat the same mistakes as in the national executive elections last year.

Then, lack of leafleting and activity allowed the “Moderates” to sneak in.

“We have to throw everything into winning this vote,” said PCS member Paul Murphy.

“The Left Unity group have brought out an excellent leaflet arguing why people should vote yes.”

“We’re going to leaflet the Croydon Home Office workplace where around 3,000 PCS members work,” says Jon Gamble, a PCS Home Office activist.

■ **Contact your local Left Unity group to get your leaflets. E-mail PCSLeftUnity@tesco.net or go to www.mogtv.com/civilunrest**

Journalists

JOURNALISTS AT the Bradford titles of Newsquest—a division of the giant US media firm Gannett—walked out over low pay on Thursday and Friday of last week.

The members of the NUJ union are to strike again on 10 and 11 February, and then on 19 and 20 February.

The action involves staff at local papers in Bradford, Shipley, Otley, Keighley, Skipton and Ilkley.

The journalists initially asked for a pay rise of £2,000 a year each.

This would still leave many

below the national average wage of £24,000.

Lively picket lines on last week’s strike were also boosted by messages and donations from other trade unionists.

Meanwhile journalists at Newsquest’s local titles in Kendal are also set to strike over pay.

The NUJ members plan three rounds of two-day strikes, on 5 and 6 February, 12 and 13 February, and 19 and 20 February.

Management have offered just £325 a year pay rise.

In a separate dispute NUJ

members at the Carlisle *News & Star* and *Whitehaven News* in Cumbria are also balloting over pay.

NUJ MEMBERS

■ **Send messages of support for the Bradford strikers to bradfordnuj@yahoo.co.uk**

■ **Send donations for Newsquest Bradford NUJ chapel to NUJ, 22 Swan Street, Manchester.**

■ **Send messages of support for Kendal NUJ members to justin.hawkins@kendal.newsquest.co.uk**

Train drivers

DRIVERS ON English Welsh & Scottish Railway (EWS) struck solidly last Saturday and plan another strike this Saturday.

They run freight trains and are members of the Aslef union.

EWS drivers are demanding what they have been campaigning for over the last three years—a proper pay rise, a 35-hour week, all of pay to count towards pensions, and a maximum ten-hour day.

The strike stopped all freight traffic and also halted snowploughs on the network.

A driver told *Socialist Worker*, “This is a very good start to

our action. It shows there is 100 per cent support for it among our members. Now we need to turn the screw to win our just claim.”

The next strike is from 3pm Saturday afternoon to 3pm Sunday afternoon.

□ **LEADERS OF the Aslef union are calling for a national agreement across all the rail firms on drivers’ pay.**

They said last weekend that if there is no agreement to reintroduce central wage negotiations by May, their 17,000 members will be balloted on industrial action.

At present there are 36

different rates of pay. Aslef wants to see a single rate, but with premiums for drivers with some companies.

Aslef leader Mick Rix says it’s not simply about pay. “The union also wants a return to national standards on safety, training and recruitment. Of the 3,500 drivers recruited over the past two years, only 1.5 per cent were women.

“Twenty years after the Brixton riots, high unemployment still exists in black areas because there are no positive recruitment policies.”

Anti-Nazi protest



BLACK AND white united against the BNP in Halifax last Saturday

UP TO 200 local people marched round Halifax shopping centre last Saturday in protest at last week’s election of a British National Party (BNP) councillor, Adrian Marsden.

Asian teenagers led the march. Workers from a community arts project brought down life-size puppets made by local schoolchildren.

Tracey Howton, a GMB member, marched alongside the Halifax and District Trades Council banner. She told *Socialist Worker*, “People say they are not being listened to and feel disenfranchised.”

“We need the trade union leaders and members to start campaigning here, with a high

profile presence in the area. If the unions stand up it will give confidence to others.”

“This has been a wake-up call to me,” said Kate Sweeney, a local resident. “I’ve been horrified by the result, and how the mainstream media has created a climate for racists.”

“Then you hear David Blunkett talking about ‘swamping’. I’ll never vote Labour again. It’s time to get active. I’ll wear my anti-Nazi badge with pride.”

Campaigners have called a lobby outside the full council meeting on Thursday 27 February, where Marsden is due to appear.

An angry lobby greeted Robin Evans, the BNP’s coun-

cillor in Blackburn, at his first council meeting last week.

Evans was then heckled throughout the meeting.

In Burnley anti-Nazis dominated local news reports for over a week after two BNP councillors laid a wreath at the recent Holocaust memorial service.

Their stunt caused outrage. The Anti Nazi League initiated an open letter signed by Labour councillors, trade unionists and Holocaust survivors which has been given wide press coverage.

Two Labour councillors removed the BNP wreath last week.

HELEN SHOOTER

Bradford trials

ASIANS IN Bradford who were charged and imprisoned after the 2001 riot went to the court of appeal last week.

Four had their sentences reduced—so much for David Blunkett’s attack on campaigners as “maniacs” who were “whining” about high sentences.

But Lord Justice Rose ruled a further 11 would keep their sentences of between four and six and a half years.

Rose did not make any direct criticism of Judge

Gullick, who handed out the original sentences.

But Rose did say it was “unfortunate” that Gullick had said he “was not concerned with the origins of the violence”.

The court of appeal ruled the riot was almost certainly triggered by the stabbing of an Asian man in central Bradford, and said that the “Asian community was understandably concerned to defend itself against right wing groups”.

Yet Lord Justice Rose went on to condemn “the defiance

of the young”.

Imran Khan, who is representing some of the defendants, said, “The context in which the riots took place should have been taken into account. We hope that those who have yet to be sentenced will be appropriately dealt with.”

Around 20 more Asians face trial over the events in Bradford.

Asian defendants charged after the events in Oldham, who are pleading not guilty, are due in court later this year.

Students

A DEBATE on the government’s funding plans for higher education was held on Monday of last week.

The education minister Charles Clarke and Oxford University student union president Will Straw were to be the headline acts.

Clarke seems happy to preside over the most serious attacks on students since the introduction of top-up fees and the abolition of the grant.

As Clarke was announced he was greeted by an

impromptu stage invasion by protesters chanting “War on fees, not Iraq”.

The students felt it was too late for debating, as the government’s mind was made up.

Clarke, who prides himself on his reputation as a “bruiser”, quickly scuttled off stage.

Many people in the audience cheered the protesters, and Clarke got a hard time when he eventually returned to the stage.

TOM WHITTAKER

Telecoms

CONNECT, THE union for professional staff in telecoms, held a national delegate meeting in London last week.

The formal agenda focused on internal matters.

But discussion was dominated by the firefighters’ dispute and war with Iraq.

A collection was taken to the nearby Euston firefighters’ picket line. The pressure from delegates also meant that the union executive the next day agreed to back the 15 February anti-war demo.

KEITH FLETT

Diary Upcoming events

Saturday 8 February

● Anti Nazi League national conference, Manchester. Phone 020 7924 0333 for details.

Saturday 15 February

● National demonstration against the war, London. Assemble 12 noon, Embankment and Gower Street. Called by Stop the War Coalition. Phone 020

7053 2135 or go to www.stopwar.org.uk
● Demonstration against the War, Glasgow. Assemble 10am, People’s Palace, Glasgow Green. Rally 2pm. Organised by Scottish Coalition for Justice not War.

Friday 28 February–

Sunday 2 March
● Revolution 2003—a teach-in to build resistance to war and capitalism, hosted by Socialist Worker Student Society and Spark. Phone 020 7515 2646 for details.

Monday 3 March

● Where is New Labour going? Meeting, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London.

Speakers include George Galloway, Bob Crow, Christine Blower, Mark Serwotka, John Rees and Linda Smith.

Saturday 15 March

● Socialist Alliance annual general meeting, London. For more details go to www.socialistalliance.net

Saturday 26 April

● Stop privatisation—the case for council housing. Defend Council Housing national conference, 11am–4.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Liverpool.

4-11 July

● Marxism 2003, London, organised by the SWP.



Picture: ANGELA STAPLEFORD

Schools

TEACHERS, parents and students from Laburnum Primary and Kingsland School in Hackney, east London, demonstrated on Saturday against the closure of both schools.

Speakers outlined the need to combine the fight against closures with the fight to defend union organisation by campaigning for Indro Sen, the sacked union representative from Kingsland School.

SHEILA MCGREGOR, acting NUT rep Kingsland School
■ **Petitions are available from HTA, 2 Hillman St, Hackney E8.**

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

Firefighters furious at 'tinpot tyrant' Prescott

FIREFIGHTERS ERUPTED in fury last week over the government's intervention in their pay dispute.

The government hoped that by using the big stick of the law it would intimidate firefighters. But the effect was the precise opposite.

Firefighters and control room staff struck solidly for our days last week, and are now angrier than ever with New Labour.

John McFadden, an FBU union rep from Castlemilk in Glasgow, told *Socialist Worker*, "John Prescott has acted like a tinpot tyrant. He sends out dictatorial statements rather than engaging with the firefighters and the FBU."

"He is spitting on his past as someone who was respected by a layer of trade unionists."

"This is no longer simply an issue about the conditions and pay of firefighters. The whole union movement is in the frame, and it is a struggle for all."

Ian Leahair, the FBU's east London area secretary, told *Socialist Worker*, "I visited eight picket lines in Essex during the last strike, and the message was absolutely the same everywhere—people are furious with the government."

Sick

"New Labour has not done any way with the Tories' anti-union laws. Now it seems it is ready to think up new ones to impose what they call modernisation."

"The only way we are going to get any sort of decent and early settlement to this dispute is to maintain and strengthen the level of strikes."

"What the pickets actually say is, 'We're sick of farting around.'"

"The other thing that everyone says is, 'How much money are we giving these bastards?' Nobody can understand why we keep giving money to New Labour when these ministers are trying to humiliate and

by **CHARLIE KIMBER**

defeat our union.

"This needs to be urgently discussed inside the union."

There is deep support for the firefighters inside the working class. That could have been turned into active solidarity.

John Murtagh from Clerkenwell station in London told *Socialist Worker*, "I spoke to postal workers at Mount Pleasant last weekend. There was a really great atmosphere and a sense that this was a battle for everybody."

Solid

"As public sector workers who face their own battles over privatisation and job cuts, they were acutely aware that whatever happens in the firefighters' dispute will have big implications for everyone."

"They came up with good ideas about how to show solidarity."

Last week's strikes were completely solid.

On Tuesday of last week the chief fire officer in the West Midlands tried to claim that firefighters were "drifting back to work". He was then asked why fire appliances were not available.

In a desperate attempt to cover up his lies he called in non FBU members who have never been on strike during the dispute and who previously had been paid to sit at home during strike days.

The *Sun* then said the strike was "crumbling"!

In contrast to this fabrication, the real message came from a meeting of around 1,000 West Midlands FBU members who were as determined as ever.



RALLYING IN Glasgow on Saturday

The alternative to no strikes

FBU GENERAL secretary Andy Gilchrist told 5,000 firefighters and their supporters in Glasgow last Saturday, "The truth of the matter is we have suspended strikes, we have been reasonable."

"But perhaps the time to be a little less reasonable is here."

"As long as firefighters and their representatives are treated with contempt, as long as we are not treated seriously, as long as we do not get the right to negotiate, there will be strikes and there will be more strikes."

It would have been absolutely right to step up the action. FBU members were looking for ways to escalate the dispute and needed to be drawn into activity.

FBU members must protest at their leaders' decision not to call strikes. They should not

have been suspended unless there was a genuinely much better offer on the table which gave a decent pay rise, and did not insist on job cuts and "modernisation".

FBU Eastern Command Group 3 secretary Neale Williams told *Socialist Worker*, "There are four steps that could have been taken immediately. Firstly we need more strikes."

"Secondly the FBU should write to every other union leader calling for support, and should also demand that the TUC calls a national day of action, including strikes."

"Thirdly we should have strong lobbies of Labour MPs. The planned lobby of fire minister Raynsford is a good model."

"Fourthly we should have another national demonstration to boost firefighters and

act as a focus for solidarity."

■ **Lobby Nick Raynsford, Saturday 8 February, 1.45pm, West Greenwich House, Greenwich High Road, London. Called by Lewisham Firefighters' Support Group and London Region FBU.**



■ **Make sure you get copies of Red Watch, the voice of rank and file firefighters and control staff. It can be ordered from 07973 521 594 or 07939 021 094.**

Rallies and protests

AROUND 400 firefighters and their supporters met for a rally in Bristol last weekend. They heard local trade unionists and Labour MPs Llew Smith and David Drew give support to the FBU.

Amicus member Ger Hicks, who works at Rolls-Royce, won warm applause when he condemned Labour's treatment of the firefighters while at the same time there was limitless money available for war.

He also warned about the dangers of being divided by the scapegoating of refugees.

■ **HUNDREDS OF firefighters and their supporters joined a rally in the centre of Newcastle on Saturday.**

■ **A SUCCESSFUL motorcade toured the Oldham district on**

Saturday, visiting five stations in and around the north east of Greater Manchester.

This was followed by a rally at the main Oldham station—Lees Road—attended by representatives of local trade unions, the Stop the War Coalition and the Socialist Alliance, as well as families and friends.

■ **FIREFIGHTERS IN Cardiff pushed a Reliant Robin equipped with buckets and ladders into the city centre as a symbol of how the fire service will end up under the government plans.**

■ **THE SOUTH West Region of the FBU had called a campaign rally in Gloucester on Wednesday. George Galloway MP was among the planned speakers.**

Health workers

Campaign against 'Agenda'

THIS IS about modernisation in the lairite sense—things are going to get a lot worse for health workers and patients."

That's how health worker Gill George explained why it is a priority for all health workers to campaign against the government's new package "Agenda for Change".

Gill was speaking at a meeting of supporters of the rank and file paper *Health Worker* last Saturday, which launched a campaign against the government's plans.

The government claims the new package will improve health workers' pay and conditions.

But health workers at Saturday's meeting agreed the whole package was divisive, pitting health workers against each other.

"This is not in our interests. It is about healthcare on the cheap," explains Gill.

"The government wants to increase our productivity. The Department of

Health has already boasted that this will squeeze 65 million extra working hours from health workers.

"The government wants to transfer more and more tasks from experienced staff to cheaper staff."

"The whole scheme is underfunded. The total amount the government has allocated for the new package is just £300 per worker each year over a five-year period."

"The document, which was negotiated with our union leaders, says that any pay rises and changes to pay scales will be 'within the financial constraints'."

"That means our union leaders have signed up to low pay and underfunding for the NHS. They have accepted the money is there to drop bombs on Iraq but not to fund health."

Health worker Lynne Hubbard said, "This is a disgrace. It is tied into a pay deal worth just 3.25 percent a year."

"It introduces performance-related pay—workers will have to pass 'competency tests' to go up the pay scale."

"What the government gives to one health worker it takes from another."

"Just like the firefighters, modernisation means attacking our working practices."

Fighting the government's proposals is an urgent priority for all health workers.

All NHS unions will ballot on the deal in the coming weeks and months. Leaders of most unions are recommending the deal.

But leaders of the biggest NHS union, Unison, are split on the issue and have not finally decided their position.

There is a special conference on the issue in April before a ballot of members.

Health Worker is urging local activists to call meetings in local hospitals and other NHS workplaces involving workers from all NHS unions.

HAZEL CROFT
■ **A new special issue of Health Worker about Agenda for Change will be published next week. To order copies phone Mark New on 07970 788 873 or e-mail MarkNew3@aol.com**

AN APPEAL hearing which finished on Friday of last week demanded that Birmingham FBU activist Steve Godward resign from the fire service within seven days.

In effect, this ruling amounts to a confirmation of Steve's sacking.

He is being disciplined for comments that he is alleged to have made at a trade union meeting.

Steve told *Socialist Worker*, "This case is not about me, but is an attack on the Fire Brigades Union and our pay campaign."

"The appeal hearing had four New Labour councillors and three Tories."

"It voted by four to three for me to go, so that means one Labour councillor must have voted with the Tories."

"There is a political element to do with the FBU dispute," says Steve.

"Plus everyone in this case knows that I stood as a Socialist Alliance candidate at the

last general election.

"We face a very aggressive West Midlands management, and it is important nationally that they do not succeed."

"As a socialist and an FBU activist I hope everyone will join the campaign to see the charges dropped."

A strike ballot over Steve's case is expected shortly, following a big campaign to explain the issues involved to FBU members.

■ **E-mail messages of support to steve@godwardfbu7.freemove.co.uk**

■ **A STRIKE ballot will begin soon over the case of Basinstoke FBU activist Simon Green.**

His case is an example of implementing the government's Bain review through the back door.

Simon was sacked over capability procedures, a foretaste of the tests and assessment which every firefighter

will go through if the Bain review is pushed through.

■ **THERE IS good news about Bob Pounder, who had been suspended by the union from his position after speaking out against firefighters' strikes being called off.**

After pressure from many FBU members, Bob has been reinstated.

Bob writes, "From this Monday I resumed my duties as the brigade secretary for Greater Manchester."

"There will be no disciplinary hearing."

"I wish to thank every member of the FBU, other trade unionists and all other comrades who have given their support to my reinstatement."

"I look forward now to continuing with that work."

"On the basis of our existing policy—'£30k with no strings!'—we can go forward to win this dispute. Of that I have no doubt."

"Thanks a million for your support."

Socialist Worker

Assault must mean no union cash for Blair

This is no time to put out the fire

FIREFIGHTERS' union leaders decided on Tuesday not to call any further strikes in order to get talks going with the employers and the government.

The decision is a serious mistake. The employers have not itched the Bain review. They ave not dropped their agenda of ,500 job losses, “modernisation” and station closures.

All they have done is to say that he FBU union does not have to sign p to these elements before the talking starts.

The employers and the government will certainly want to press head with such attacks before a inal settlement is agreed.

The FBU leaders this week hould have timetabled more, arder-hitting action. They should ave done everything possible to re-tore the momentum to the firefighters' campaign and appealed strongly or wider solidarity.

FBU general secretary Andy ilchrist said last weekend that there ould be more action unless fire-ighters were treated with respect. his has not happened.

The strikes were not crumbling. he two strikes last week were solid nd firefighters more determined.

The government could have een beaten. It was nervous about ore strikes during its planned ar on Iraq.

That's why deputy prime minister ohn Prescott jumped from launching egal assaults last week to calling the BU into negotiations this week.

The negotiations should not dis- uise what Prescott was threatening he firefighters with.

He threatened to introduce emer- gency legislation restoring a power xed 44 years ago. This would allow im to impose pay and conditions cross the fire service.

Prescott was saying he would bolish collective bargaining with he union. This is an open declara- ion of war on organised workers.

The next blow came from the ttorney-general, Lord Goldsmith basic salary £93,000). He said that irefighters could be banned from



UNION LEADERS have not matched firefighters' mood for resistance

striking as soon as any military action began against Iraq.

A war would be a “material change in circumstances” allowing the attorney-general to seek an injunction halting action. This would have cleared the way to sending FBU leaders to jail.

This is from a government which a few weeks ago was complaining that the firefighters had made their strike political!

Over the last six years New Labour has refused to restore workers' rights that the Tories took away.

Last week was a new low—the prospect of extra anti-union laws beyond even those the Tories dreamt up.

The government assault should have been met by a massive show of solidarity with the firefighters from the whole trade union movement. The mood was there—if the union leaders had tapped it.

One example of the feeling was the motion passed by the RMT rail workers' union London Transport Regional Committee.

It unanimously deplored the gov-

ernment's attacks and called on the TUC to organise general strike action.

In January 1984 when the Tories banned trade unions at the GCHQ spy centre, TUC head Len Murray stormed out of a meeting with Margaret Thatcher and called for a national union response.

The next month around one million held token one-hour stoppages against the ban.

Twenty years later the TUC is far more timid than Murray—who was no revolutionary.

Brendan Barber, the TUC gen-

eral secretary elect, said he was “deeply concerned that this dispute is becoming increasingly polarised”, but he offered no concrete solidarity with the FBU.

Instead all the TUC's efforts were bent towards fixing a deal at almost any price.

As war looms a serious trade union revolt would win support from the millions who want to see Blair humbled.

Every trade unionist must pressure their union leaders for action if Prescott resumes these attacks.

THE POLITICAL fallout from the government's legal assault on the fire-fighters is immense.

It is an example which symbolises so much of New Labour's attitude towards the unions—arrogant, bullying, contemptuous of working people fighting for a better life.

This bungling, over-bearing use of anti-union laws will quite rightly be quoted at every union conference held this year when it comes to a discussion of how the unions should spend their political fund.

There should not be a penny for New Labour, which has bludgeoned the unions. The money should go to parties and organisations which backed the firefighters and which stand up for workers' rights.

Part

Thousands of fire-fighters have already withdrawn from the part of the political fund which goes to the Labour Party.

But the aftershocks are not just felt in the FBU.

Mick Rix, the leader of the Aslef train drivers' union, delivered a vote of no confidence in both Tony Blair and John Prescott after the new legal moves were announced.

“We have to start to say that Tony's leadership is becoming a failure. He is creating divisions among the labour movement, and it is probably time for Tony to go,” said Mick Rix.

Utter

He went on to attack John Prescott:

“I would never have thought a Labour deputy prime minister, especially with the background he's come from, would utter the words he did.

“John Prescott has just about severed all the friendships he had left with people in the trade union movement.

“I don't see anybody giving him one ounce of credibility.

“If John had anything about him he should have resigned rather than make the statement he did. But I don't think he has the guts to do that.

“It is outrageous to intervene to impose a settlement when all he has done is intervene to block one.”

Picture: RAY SMITH

For more on the firefighters' dispute see page 15

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